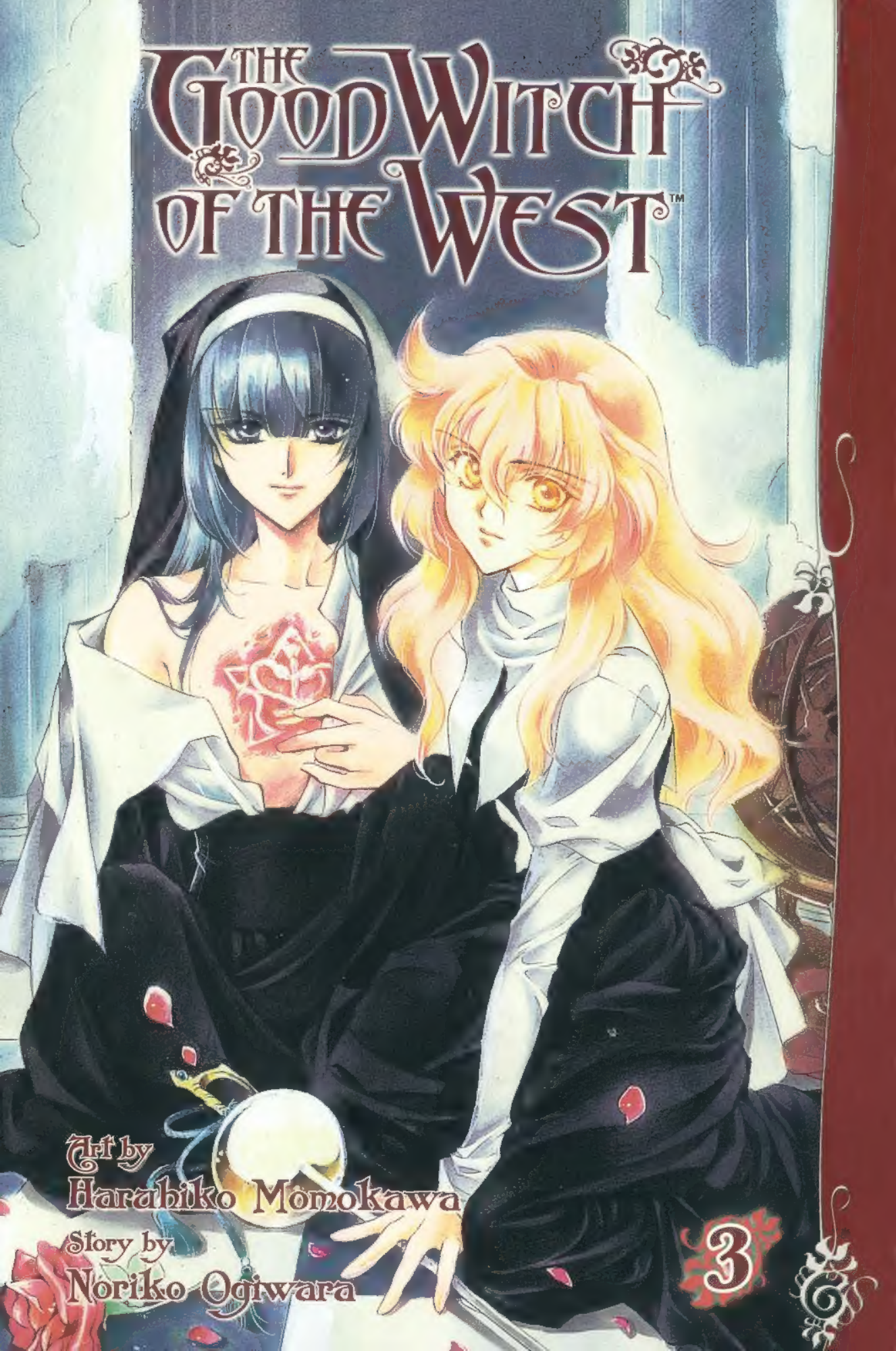
The Good Witch of the West™



Art by
Harahiko Mōmokawa

Story by
Noriko Ogiwara

3

EVANGELINE

The Good Witch of the West Volume 3

Story By Noriko Ogiwara

Art By Haruhiko Momokawa

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THE GOOD WITCH OF THE WEST™

Story by Noriko Ogiwara
Art by Haruhiko Momokawa

Volume 3

Story so far in

THE GOOD WITCH OF THE WEST™

The Star Queen Astraea rules Graal, a fairy-tale kingdom in which good and the Light prevail. Heretics are condemned with the utmost fervor. But one of the daughters of the Star Queen, Edilene, chose a heretic as a lover, and was banished with him to a cold tower in the harsh highlands of Sera Field.

Years later, fifteen-year-old Firiel Dee, daughter of the reclusive Professor Dee and the late Edilene, learns she's a Queen-in-Waiting, a potential heir to the throne of Graal, when an unusual heirloom necklace is recognized at the Roland family ball as proof of her royal blood!

Soon after, Firiel's home is destroyed, her servant killed, her father gone missing, and her best friend Rune, the professor's apprentice, kidnapped. Using her newfound status as a granddaughter of the Star Queen Astraea, Firiel, with the assistance of the Rolands, rescues Rune.

In return for Rune's protection by the house Roland, Firiel agrees to join Adale Roland as a confidante at the palace at Hieraglion. But first Firiel must learn to be a lady at Taurus Academy...

Main Characters

Firiel

Rune

Adale

Eusis

Professor Dee

Lot

Tabitha and Bo Holy

Leandra Cheviat

Marie

Main Characters

Ravenna

Igraine

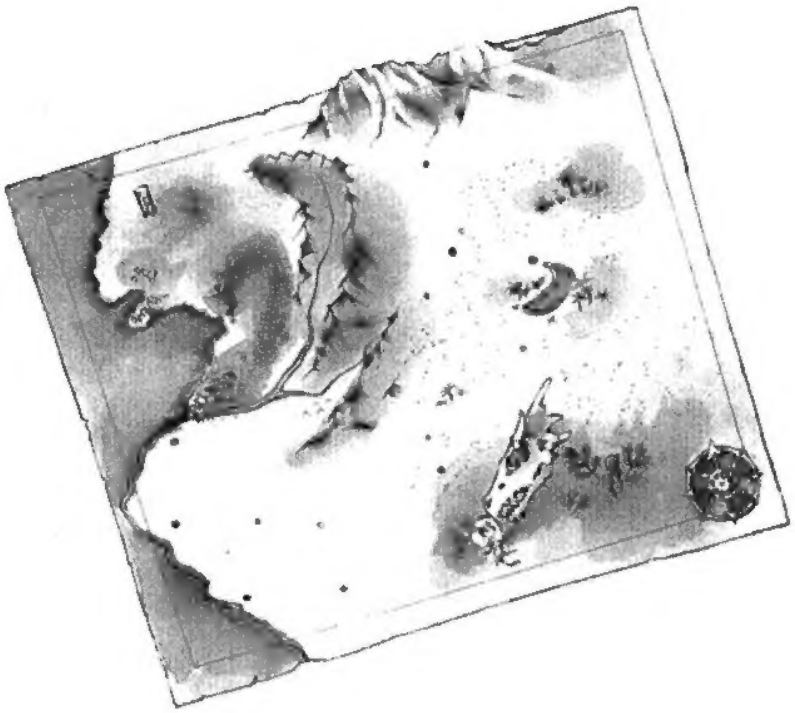
Vincent

Cisaria

Prophecy

The Good Witch of the West
and the Brave King of the East
summoned a wise man and a poet,
then traveled to an icy city.
The end begins when the
midday star falls from the sky.
Who is standing behind you?
That...

(from a children's tale in fenistell)



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カラーン
カラーン!
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Chapter 10:
Down the Garden Path

THREE DAYS AGO
OOH, FATHER!
THIS IS TYRANNY!
I CANNOT BELIEVE HE ENROLLED YOU IN THE TAURUS GIRLS' ACADEMY! IT'S TOO MUCH! YOU DON'T KNOW NEARLY ENOUGH TO SURVIVE IN SUCH A DANGEROUS PLACE, FIRIEL!
I'LL BE OKAY, ADALE.
YOU'RE RIGHT. I KNOW ALMOST NOTHING ABOUT THE WORLD OF THE NOBLES. BUT WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME, SO THIS CALLS FOR DRASTIC MEASURES.
LEARNING AT AN ALL-GIRLS' SCHOOL FOR THE NOBILITY IS THE QUICKEST WAY FOR ME TO RISE TO YOUR LEVEL OF EXPERTISE, DON'T YOU THINK?

BE CAREFUL, FIRIEL. PLEASE.
I WILL.
LORD EUSIS!
PLEASE, MY LORD!
TAKE CARE OF RUNE!
LOOK IN ON HIM FROM TIME TO TIME!

...HE'LL EVEN FORGET TO EAT!
PLEASE! IF SOMEONE DOESN'T KEEP AN EYE ON HIM...
FIRIEL IS ALWAYS SO CONCERNED ABOUT SIR RUNE.
LEAVING RUNE BEHIND TO GO AWAY TO THE TAURUS ACADEMY MUST BE VERY DIFFICULT FOR HER.
WELL, THEY WERE RAISED LIKE SIBLINGS.

EVEN IF...
...IT IS THE ONLY THING SHE CAN DO TO PROTECT HIM.
I'VE FINALLY ARRIVED AT THE ACADEMY. IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S PART OF THE TAURUS CONVENT
I MADE A DEAL WITH THE COUNT OF RUALGO IN ORDER TO PROTECT RUNE FROM A SECRET ORGANIZATION CALLED THE "STAFF OF THE SERPENT."

GIRLS FROM BOTH NOBLE FAMILIES AND THE BETTER-OFF COMMONER FAMILIES COME TO TAURUS ACADEMY. EVEN ADALE, AFTER SHE TURNED ELEVEN.
THEY'RE TAUGHT THE RULES AND ETIQUETTE THEY'LL NEED AT COURT.
MY PART OF THE BARGAIN IS TO STAY BY ADALE'S SIDE AS SHE ASCENDS TO THE ROYAL COURT AT HIERAGLION PALACE, AND EVENTUALLY TO THE THRONE AS THE NEXT STAR QUEEN ASTRAEA.
"THAT PLACE IS A VIPER'S NEST!"
ADALE MAY HAVE CALLED IT THAT...
...BUT WHY? THIS PLACE SEEMS SO PEACEFUL AND SERENE.
YEEP!

ARE
YOU
OKAY?

SHE LOOKS ABOUT THE SAME AGE AS ME.
MY NAME IS FIRIEL. I JUST TRANSFERRED HERE TODAY.
I HOPE WE WILL BE FRIENDS.
YOU MUSTN'T BE SEEN TALKING TO ME...!
NO, YOU MUSTN'T.
YOU HAVEN'T SCRAPED YOURSELF UP, HAVE YOU?
YOU THERE! TRANSFER STUDENT!

!!
WE ARE MEMBERS OF THE TAURUS ACADEMY STUDENT COUNCIL.
AS YOU HAVE JUST ENROLLED IN THE ACADEMY, YOU WILL NEED COPIES OF THE ACADEMY RULES AND THE STUDENT HANDBOOK.
WE HAVE EXTRAS IN THE STUDENT COUNCIL ROOM. IF YOU WOULD BE SO KIND AS TO FOLLOW US...
ㅂㅏ

!?
PLEASE, AFTER YOU.
whisper
...SPEAKING TO A SERVANT, OF ALL THINGS...!

クスクス
WH...
TELL US WHO YOU REALLY ARE!
WHY DID YOU DO THAT?!

YOU CANNOT HIDE ANYTHING FROM US. TELL US THE TRUTH ABOUT YOURSELF!
EVERY STUDENT'S SOCIAL STATUS IS CONFIDENTIAL.
IT IS UTTERLY FORBIDDEN TO SPEAK OF YOUR RANK, EVEN TO YOUR CLOSEST FRIENDS.
RATHER THAN PROMOTE EQUALITY, THIS SYSTEM INSTEAD REVEALS THE NATURAL NOBILITY IN LADIES OF PROPER BIRTH.
SUCH QUALITIES CANNOT BE HIDDEN, NO MATTER HOW HARD ONE TRIES. HIGH-BORN YOUNG LADIES SIMPLY EXUDE CLASS.

THE GIRL YOU SPOKE TO BEFORE IS A "SERVANT."
GIRLS OF PROPER RANK KNOW HOW TO SELECT CONVERSATION PARTNERS AND FRIENDS APPROPRIATE TO THEIR OWN STATION.
YOU, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAVE ALREADY AMPLY PROVEN YOUR BASE NATURE!
TELL US! BY WHOSE ORDERS WERE YOU SENT TO THIS ACADEMY?!
YOU ARE OBVIOUSLY NO NOBLE'S DAUGHTER.
WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?
WHICH NOBLE HOUSE DO YOU SERVE?!

NOW REMOVE YOUR CLOTHING!
SINCE EVERYONE HERE MUST WEAR UNIFORMS, THE EASIEST WAY TO DETERMINE A GIRL'S RANK IS TO EVALUATE HER UNDERCLOTHES.
IF YOU CHOOSE NOT TO UNDRESS YOURSELF, I CAN EASILY SHRED THEM OFF OF YOU.

NOW HURRY!
THESE GIRLS DON'T HAVE ANY RESPECT FOR OTHER PEOPLE.
JUST BECAUSE THEY'RE NOBLES, THEY USE THAT AS AN EXCUSE TO LOOK DOWN THEIR NOSES AT EVERYBODY ELSE.
NO. I WILL NOT UNDRESS.
THAT MAKES THEM LOWER THAN ANY SERVANT.
I WILL NOT TAKE ORDERS FROM THE LIKES OF YOU!

WHO IS THIS GIRL? SHE WAS SO TIMID A MOMENT AGO...
WHAT ...?
LADY RAVEN-NA!
...BUT NOW SHE LOOKS ALMOST FIERCE ENOUGH TO INTIMIDATE EVEN ME!
IS THIS A CHALLENGE ...?

I SEARCHED THE GIRL'S LUGGAGE.
NO ONE OUTSIDE OF THE HIGH NOBILITY COULD EVER AFFORD GARMENTS LIKE THESE.
WHAT? THE LITTLE WENCH! THIS IS REAL LACE!
A SERVANT WEARING A LADY'S LACE MEANS ONLY ONE THING...
GIVE THOSE BACK!
WELL. YOU HAVE SOME HIDDEN SURPRISES.

...YOU ARE A DOG!!
LOWER AND MORE DESPICABLE THAN ANY SERVANT, DOGS ARE SENT TO SNIFF ABOUT THE ACADEMY...
...SPYING ON THE DECENT STUDENTS FOR WHATEVER HIDDEN REASONS THEIR MASTERS MAY HAVE.

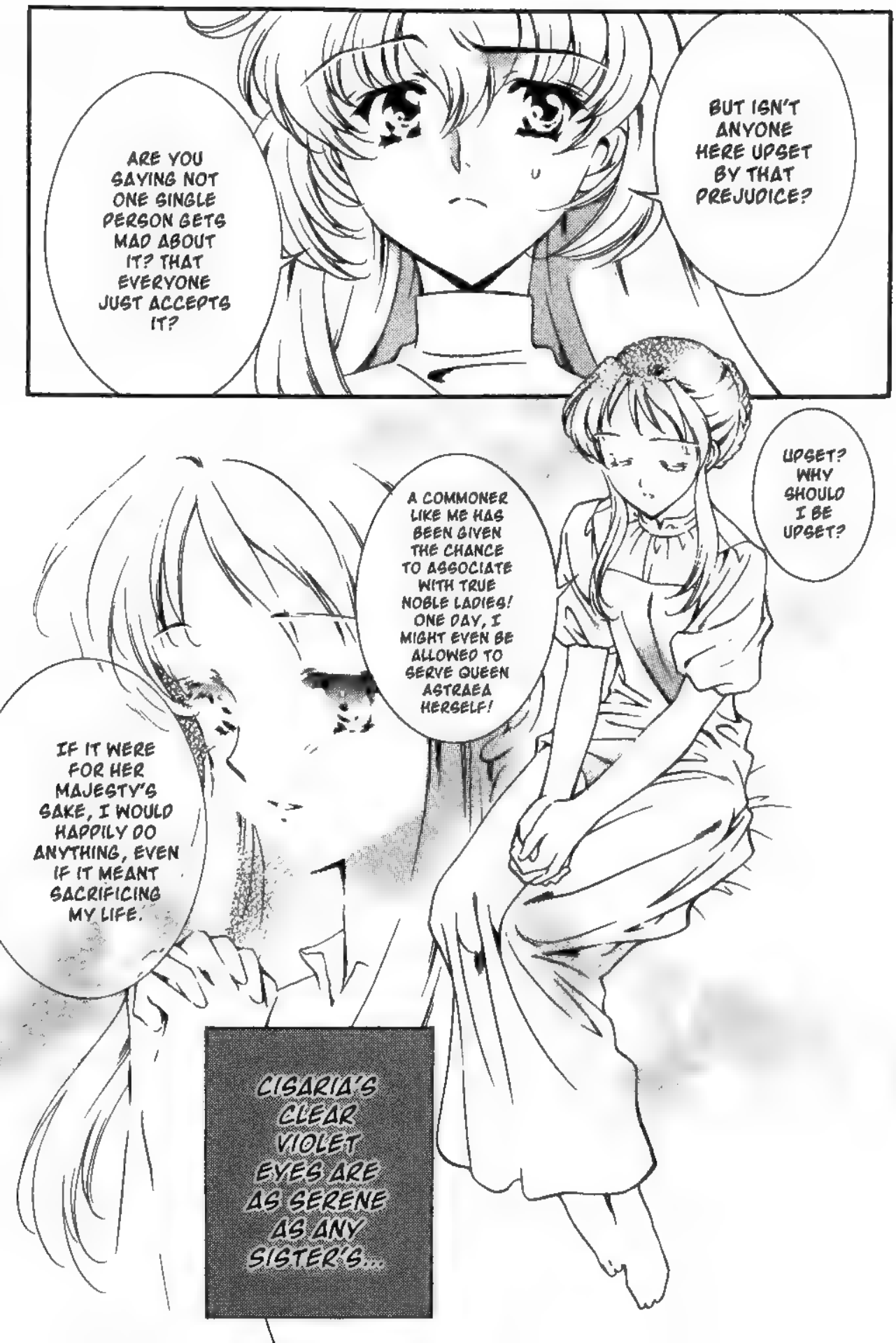
"FROM THIS MOMENT FORWARD, NO STUDENT OF THE ACADEMY WILL UTTER ONE WORD TO YOU!"
から...
.....
カチャ
EXCUSE ME...
THIS PLACE IS UNBELIEV-ABLE!

Sigh—
I THINK I'M STARTING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT ADALE MEANT.
BUT...
...I CAN'T JUST RUN AWAY.

WHO'S THERE?!
UM...
...PARDON ME? WOULD YOU BE KIND ENOUGH TO HELP ME DOWN?
OOH! WILD STRAW-BERRIES!
DID YOU CRAWL ALL THAT WAY THROUGH THE CEILING JUST TO BRING THESE TO ME?

YOU'RE SO INNOCENT AND DEFENSELESS...
...I CANNOT PICTURE YOU PLOTTING ANYTHING HORRIBLE.
WELL, BECAUSE OF THE STUDENT COUNCIL'S EDICT, THERE'S NO NORMAL WAY TO TALK TO YOU.
BUT... I DON'T REALLY THINK YOU ARE A DOG.
LABELING PEOPLE SERVANTS OR DOGS OR WHATEVER ELSE...!
HOW CAN YOU PEOPLE JUST LET THAT KIND OF TYRANNY GO ON?!
ぱぐ
ぱぐ
I'M NOT PLOTTING ANYTHING AT ALL!
JEEZ! THOSE GIRLS ON THE STUDENT COUNCIL REALLY TICK ME OFF!
YOU ARE SUCH AN ODD PERSON, FIRIEL.

THE TAURUS ACADEMY IS A SCHOOL MEANT FOR YOUNG LADIES OF NOBLE FAMILIES...
...BUT SOMETIMES A LUCKY COMMONER MANAGES TO ENROLL.
MANY TAKE THE SAME CLASSES AS TRUE YOUNG LADIES SO THAT THEY MIGHT SOMEDAY POSE AS LADIES THEMSELVES, FUNCTIONING AS STAND-INS FOR THEIR MISTRESSES.
ON THE SURFACE, THE ACADEMY HAS NO DISCRIMINATION BASED ON SOCIAL RANK, BUT BY THE TIME A STUDENT REACHES THE UPPER GRADES, THE DIVISION BETWEEN THE RULERS AND THE RULED IS OBVIOUS.
THE STUDENT COUNCIL ARE THE RULERS, THE TOP RANK.
RAVENNA IS THE PRESIDENT. HER TWO CRONIES ARE HYLA AND LYTICIA.
NO ONE HERE WOULD EVER DREAM OF GOING UP AGAINST THOSE THREE.


ARE YOU SAYING NOT ONE SINGLE PERSON GETS MAD ABOUT IT? THAT EVERYONE JUST ACCEPTS IT?
BUT ISN'T ANYONE HERE UPSET BY THAT PREJUDICE?
UPSET? WHY SHOULD I BE UPSET?
A COMMONER LIKE ME HAS BEEN GIVEN THE CHANCE TO ASSOCIATE WITH TRUE NOBLE LADIES! ONE DAY, I MIGHT EVEN BE ALLOWED TO SERVE QUEEN ASTRAEA HERSELF!
IF IT WERE FOR HER MAJESTY'S SAKE, I WOULD HAPPILY DO ANYTHING, EVEN IF IT MEANT SACRIFICING MY LIFE.
CISARIA'S CLEAR VIOLET EYES ARE AS SERENE AS ANY SISTER'S...

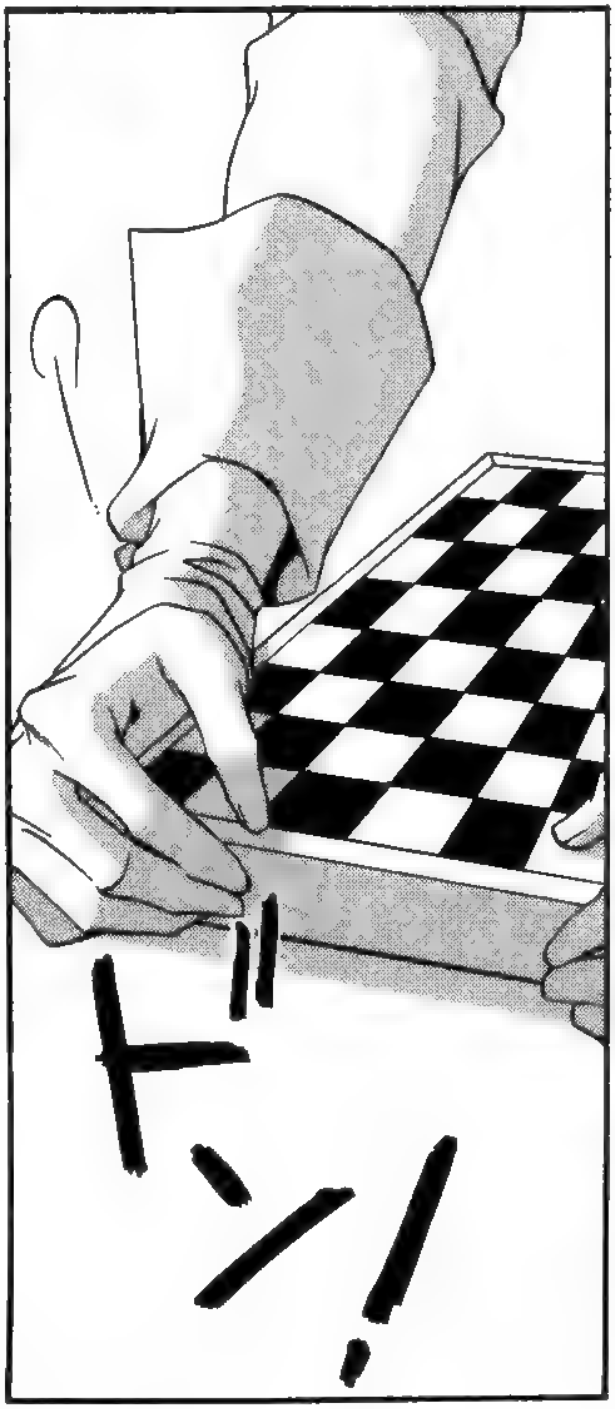
BUT THERE'S NO WAY I'M GOING TO LET THOSE PRISSY GIRLS BOSS ME AROUND!
SUMMER EQUINOX FESTIVAL...?
Hmph.
SHOW SOME RESPECT WHEN I'M SPEAKING TO YOU!
SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT HERE.
A NORMAL GIRL WOULD BE BEGGING FOR MERCY BY NOW!
SHE'S BEEN UTTERLY IGNORED BY EVERYONE FOR AN ENTIRE TWO WEEKS.
SO? WHAT ABOUT IT?
EVERYONE IS WELL AWARE THAT YOU ARE A DOG.
LETTING SOMEONE LIKE YOU ROAM AROUND LOOSE DURING SUCH AN IMPORTANT EVENT IS UNACCEPTABLE.
ACCORDINGLY, IT HAS BEEN DECIDED THAT A KEEPER WILL BE ASSIGNED TO YOU FOR THE DURATION.

SHE IS A FOURTH-YEAR STUDENT, ONE YEAR YOUNGER THAN YOU.
SHE IS ALSO A TOP CANDIDATE FOR A POSITION ON THE COUNCIL, SO DON'T UNDERES-TIMATE HER.
HER NAME IS ROSELITTE.
BE MY GUEST.
NOTHING SEEMS TO WORK RIGHT WITH HER.
I'M HERE ONLY BECAUSE IT IS MY DUTY TO WATCH YOU, NOTHING MORE.
JUST SO YOU KNOW, YOU'RE NOT THE ONE I WAS MAD AT.
LET ME MAKE ONE THING CLEAR. I HAVE NO INTENTION OF SPEAK-ING TO YOU.
I'M SORRY ABOUT HOW GROUCHY I WAS BACK THERE.
JUST WHAT KIND OF FAMILY IS SHE FROM, ANYWAY?

WHAT DETERMINATION IN HER EYES...
JUST LIKE A WELL-TRAINED HUNTING DOG.
Heh.
YOU SEE, I'M USED TO SOUR-LOOKING PEOPLE.
ONE PERSON I KNOW ALWAYS LOOKS LIKE HE JUST BIT INTO A LEMON OR SOMETHING.
BUT WHEN SOMETHING REALLY TERRIBLE HAPPENS, HE'S ALWAYS THERE TO HELP ME.
OH, SORRY.
I WAS JUST THINKING THAT I COULD REALLY LEARN TO LIKE YOU.
WHY DID YOU LAUGH?!
I THINK THE PEOPLE WHO ARE TRULY WORTH TRUSTING ARE LIKE THAT.
THEY'RE THE ONES WHO ARE THERE FOR YOU WHEN YOU'RE IN TROUBLE, NOT THE ONES WHO JUST ACT NICE AROUND YOU.

I WONDER HOW YOU'RE DOING...
RUNE...

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?

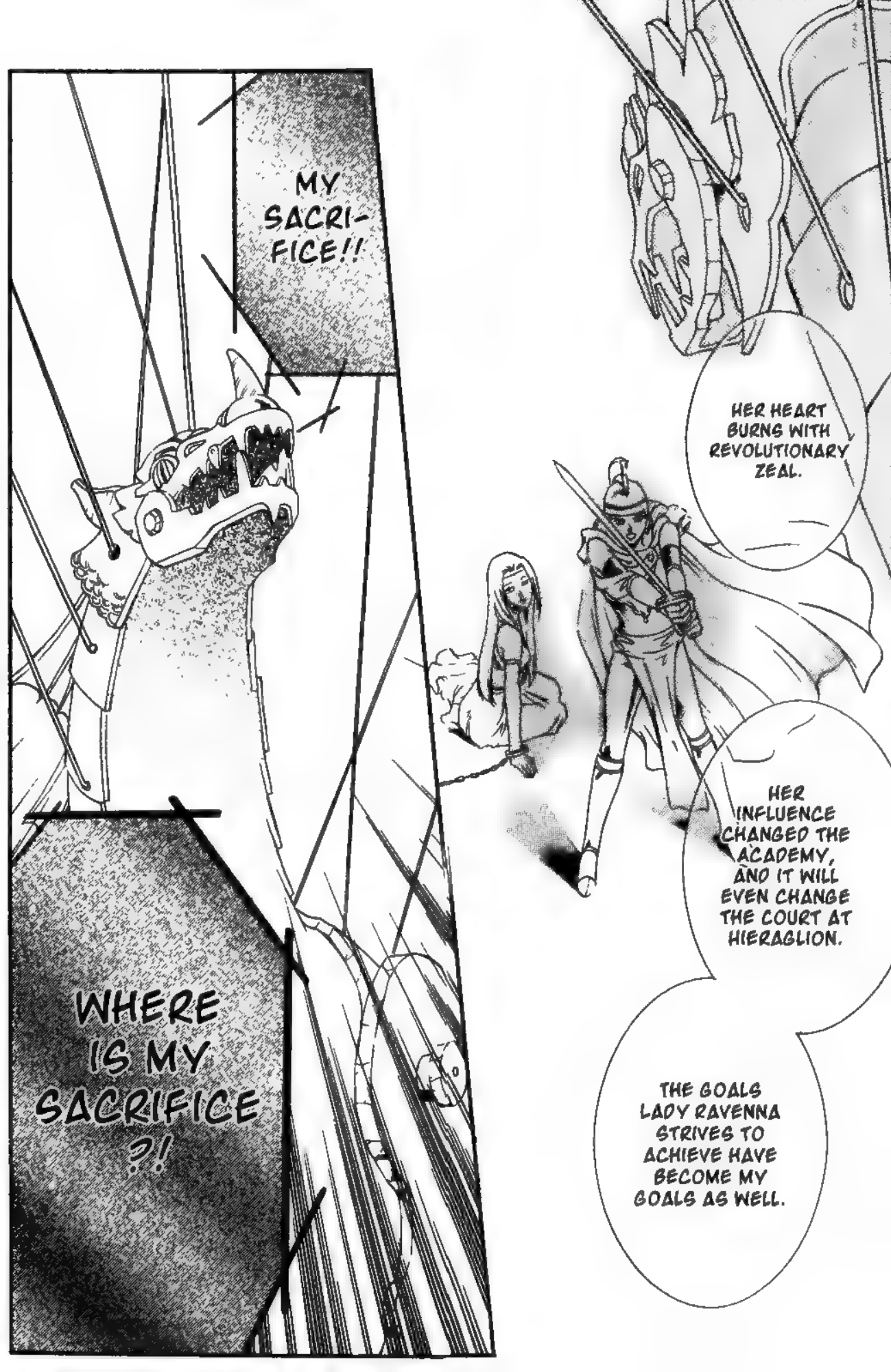

トン!

RUNE, ARE YOU AWARE...
ACCORDING TO DR MELING
THIS YOUNG MAN
DOES NOT SLEEP MUCH AT NIGHT. HIS HOSTILE STARES KEEP JUST ABOUT EVERYONE ELSE AT BAY
SINCE ASTRONOMY HAS BEEN FORBIDDEN TO HIM..
I HAVE TO FIND ALTERNATIVES TO DRAW HIM OUT OF HIS MELANCHOLY
...THAT I HAVE BEEN TRAINED ALL MY LIFE TO EXCEL IN CHESS?
IT IS A SUBTLY INTRIGUING GAME
TELL YOU WHAT. BEAT ME TWICE IN A ROW, AND I SHALL EVEN CONSIDER GRANTING YOU ONE REQUEST. ANYTHING YOU WISH.
THOUGH IT WILL LIKELY BE YEARS BEFORE HE CAN DEFEAT ME EVEN ONCE...

ANYTHING ...?
WOW!!

Village...?
I KNOW A SPOT WITH A BETTER VIEW.
I'VE SEEN THE HOLY PLAY BEFORE AT THE VILLAGE FESTIVAL, BUT IT WAS NOTHING COMPARED TO THIS!
THE SIZE OF IT ALL IS AMAZING! THE STAGE...THE COSTUMES...
THEY MUST'VE TAKEN FOREVER TO MAKE!
THIS WAY.
WOW! WE'RE SO HIGH UP!

THIS IS A WONDERFUL PLACE TO WATCH THE PLAY!
THANK YOU, ROSELITTE!
DON'T THINK I DID THIS FOR YOU!
YOU'RE A DANGER, SO YOU NEED TO BE KEPT AS FAR AWAY FROM OTHERS AS POSSIBLE!
I WILL NOT LET YOU DISRUPT THE STUDENT COUNCIL'S PLAY, NO MATTER WHAT!
MY LOYALTY BELONGS TO LADY RAVENNA, AND LADY RAVENNA ONLY!


MY SACRI-FICE!!
WHERE IS MY SACRIFICE ?!
HER HEART BURNS WITH REVOLUTIONARY ZEAL.
HER INFLUENCE CHANGED THE ACADEMY, AND IT WILL EVEN CHANGE THE COURT AT HIERAGLION.
THE GOALS LADY RAVENNA STRIVES TO ACHIEVE HAVE BECOME MY GOALS AS WELL.

Wow!
Oh my!
DIM THE LIGHTS!

Ah...!

WHAT JUST HAPPENED...?!
SOMEONE JUST TRIED TO SHOVE ME OFF THE PLATFORM...?!

A SACRIFICE!
THERE'S BEEN A SACRIFICE!
LIGHTS!
SOMEBODY, LIGHTS!
ROSELITTE...!!
ONE OF US HAS BEEN SACRIFICED!!!

EXCUSE ME...
LADY ADALE...?
OH, MY...!!

TAURUS ACADEMY, THE ALL-GIRLS SCHOOL IN THE HEART OF THE TAURUS CONVENT
ALL ITS STUDENTS EVENTUALLY TAKE THEIR PLACES IN THE ROYAL COURT AT HIERAGLION
IN OTHER WORDS, THE TAURUS ACADEMY IS THE ROYAL COURT IN MINIATURE.

Chapter 11: The Secret Machinations of Flowers

SO, MISS FIRIEL...
YOU CLAIM THAT SOMEONE ATTEMPTED TO PUSH YOU FROM THE SCAFFOLDING, YOU REACTED TO DEFEND YOURSELF, AND IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER ROSELITTE FELL.
THE TAURUS ACADEMY JUDICIARY COUNCIL
ARE YOU ALLEGING THAT, IN ATTEMPTING TO KILL YOU, ROSELITTE INSTEAD FELL TO HER OWN DEATH?
ぎゅっ...
IT WAS TOO DARK FOR ME TO SEE ANYTHING.
IT ALL HAPPENED SO SUDDENLY. I JUST... REACTED.
BUT I THINK...
...THERE WAS SOME TIME BETWEEN MY GETTING SHOVED AND ROSELITTE'S FALL.

THE STUDENT COUNCIL ALLEGES THAT YOU PUSHED ROSELITTE OFF THE SCAFFOLDING.
ROSELITTE...
THEY CLAIM A DANGEROUS SPY HAS PERPETRATED A HORRIBLE CRIME.
THAT'S RIDICU-LOUS!
ME? WHY ?!
THIS WHOLE PLACE IS RIDICULOUS!
CALLING PEOPLE DOGS, SPIES, SERVANTS... IT'S STUPID! AND FOR THE SAKE OF THIS STUPID POWER GAME, ROSELITTE...!!
WHY WOULD I EVER WANT TO KILL ROSELITTE ?!

THIS IS UNEXPECTED. YOU LOOKED MORE LIKE THE PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE TYPE.
ROSELITTE DIED...!
LOOKING AT ME HOW?! WHERE?!
IN THE MONTH THAT I'VE BEEN HERE, EVERY SINGLE ONE OF YOU HAS TURNED YOUR BACK THE SECOND YOU SAW ME!
HOW CAN YOU FORM AN OPINION ABOUT SOMEONE YOU NEVER LOOKED STRAIGHT IN THE FACE?!
I SEE YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.
YES, EVERY STUDENT IN THIS SCHOOL WAS ADVISED TO AVOID YOU.
HOWEVER, IN ORDER TO DO THAT, EVERYONE HAD TO PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO YOU.

MA'AM! THERE'S NEWS! TWO NEW STUDENTS JUST TRANSFERRED INTO THE FIFTH-YEAR CLASS!
WHAT ARE THEY LIKE?
MORE TRANSFERS? AT THIS POINT IN THE SEMESTER?
ONE OF THEM IS A CHESTNUT-HAIRED GIRL...
...AND SHE KEEPS ASKING FOR FIRIEL!
THE MYSTERIOUS TRANSFER STUDENT WITH THE BEAUTIFUL RED HAIR...
IT IS VERY RARE THAT THE ACADEMY SEES SOMEONE AS CONSPICUOUS AS YOU.

MARIE...?!
FIRIEL! WE'VE BEEN SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU!
WHEN I WENT TO AMBERPOINTE TO ASK ABOUT YOU, LADY ADALE TOLD ME EVERYTHING.
SHE SAID YOU WERE IN A LOT OF TROUBLE.
I JUST WANTED TO DO WHATEVER I COULD TO HELP, SO...
THANK YOU...
MARIE WAS MY FIRST FRIEND IN THE VILLAGE SCHOOL.

THIS IS RUNETTE.
DON'T ACT TOO SURPRISED, OKAY?
SOMEBODY ELSE CAME WITH ME.
RU--
??!!
I HAVE BEEN ASKED TO DELIVER A PACKAGE TO YOU.
ARE YOU MISS VINCENT, PRESIDENT OF THE LITERATURE CLUB?

TO ME...?
WHAT?!
UNBELIEVABLE...! THIS IS A NOVELLA BY EVANGELINE! HANDWRITTEN, EVEN!
AND IT'S A BRAND NEW STORY!
NO WAY!

EVANGELINE IS THE PEN NAME OF THE SINGLE MOST POPULAR AUTHOR IN ALL OF GRAAL.
HOWEVER, HER TRUE NAME, AGE AND RANK ARE ALL SHROUDED IN MYSTERY.
WHO IS EVANGE-LINE...?
HER NOVELLAS GENERALLY FIRST APPEAR AT THE ROYAL COURT IN HIERAGLION.
ABOUT HALF A YEAR LATER, COPIES FINALLY FILTER DOWN TO THE GENERAL POPULACE.
SO THIS EVANGE-LINE...
...IS REALLY ADALE...?

...BUT NOW I KNOW SHE'S REALLY NOT! SHE'S A MUCH MORE DEEP AND COMPLEX WOMAN.
I MEAN, AT FIRST GLANCE, LADY ADALE LOOKS LIKE ANY OTHER PRINCESS...
YES! I WAS SO SHOCKED WHEN I FOUND OUT!
THAT WAS THE BIGGEST SURPRISE OF ALL! I NEVER KNEW YOU WERE SUCH A GRAND PERSONAGE.
fangirl Marie
AND HER LADYSHIP'S COUSIN AND ALSO GRANDDAUGHTER TO QUEEN ASTRAEA HERSELF IS NONE OTHER THAN YOU, FIRIEL!
IT WOULD BE SO NICE IF THIS WAS JUST A BAD DREAM.
FIRIEL ...?
ぐったり...

THAT'S NOT ALL
JUST THE OTHER DAY, LORD BJAIS WAS ATTACKED NEAR SERA FIELD'S TOWER BY BLACK-CLOAKED MEN!
SERA FIELD?! WHAT WAS HIS LORDSHIP DOING THERE?!
ONCE THIS PREPARATION IS COMPLETE, IT WILL CREATE A REVELATION THAT WILL TURN THIS ENTIRE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN!

I THOUGHT HE BURNED THE EPHEMERIS THAT NIGHT...
...BUT...
...WHAT IF HE...
SISTER FIRIEL!
WE'RE SO SORRY FOR WHAT WE DID! PLEASE FORGIVE US!
どっさり
WE NEVER KNEW YOU WERE A FRIEND OF EVANGELINE'S!
THESE ARE THE SAME GIRLS THAT JUST DAYS AGO MEEKLY OBEYED THE COUNCIL...
IT'S THE "EVANGELINE EFFECT."

"TO MY BEAUTIFUL SPRING BREEZE, MY DEAREST FRIEND, FIRIEL."
EVA WAS THE PRESIDENT OF THE LITERATURE CLUB...
...AND THE STAR OF THE ENTIRE ACADEMY.
HERE, SEE? ON THE FIRST PAGE OF EVA'S MANUSCRIPT ...
...SHE DEDICATES THIS STORY TO YOU.
IF SHE WERE STILL HERE, SHE WOULD NEVER ALLOW THOSE SHALLOW ...
... TWISTED STUDENT COUNCIL GIRLS TO STRUT AROUND AS IF THEY OWNED EVERY-THING!

THIS IS EVA'S MESSAGE TO ME...
SHE HASN'T FORGOTTEN ABOUT US HERE. SHE HASN'T OVERLOOKED WHAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE SHE LEFT...!
I LIKE TO THINK SO.
EVANGELINE...
VINCENT...
WERE YOU FRIENDS WITH ADA--I MEAN, EVANGELINE?
YOU WILL BE THE FRESH WIND THAT BLOWS AWAY THE DARK CLOUDS THAT HAVE GATHERED OVER THE ACADEMY.
EVANGELINE CALLED FIRIEL A "SPRING BREEZE."
EVERY FAN OF EVA'S WRITING AND ALL WHO SUPPORT HER CAUSE WILL BE FIRMLY BEHIND YOU, FIRIEL.

EVERYTHING HAS GOTTEN SO WEIRD...
ヒュウウウ
ARE YOU STILL AWAKE?
FIRIEL?
フーコー
RU...
RUNETTE ...!
ガオオオ
LET'S PLAY CHESS.

I GIVE UP!
THERE'S NO WAY I'M BEATING YOU.
MARIE TOLD ME WHAT YOU DID.
SHE SAID YOU AND LORD EUSIS MADE A BET.
YES.
A BET THAT I WON.
YOU'RE SUCH AN IDIOT, YOU KNOW THAT?
YOU HAD TO KNOW YOU WERE GOING TO BE ATTACKED, BUT YOU STILL MADE LORD EUSIS TAKE YOU UP THERE!

I DIDN'T KNOW WE WERE GOING TO BE ATTACKED.
THAT'S A LIE!
YOU HAD TO KNOW, BECAUSE THE EPHEMERIS IS STILL THERE! YOU FAKED BURNING IT AND JUST HID IT SOMEWHERE THAT NIGHT! IT'S OBVIOUS!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?
IF YOU COULDN'T HANDLE COMPLICATED REASONING AND STRATEGY, YOU'D NEVER BE ANY GOOD AT IT.
HOPE FOR YOU AT CHESS.
I HAD THOUGHT LETTING YOU GO TO HIERAGLION WAS A DANGEROUS AND STUPID IDEA.
YOU KNOW...
...SEEING RUNE LIKE THIS, ALL DRESSED UP IN GIRLS' CLOTHES, YOU WOULDN'T THINK SO, BUT...HE'S ACTUALLY BEAUTIFUL.
FIRIEL...
IT SEEMS THERE IS SOME HOPE FOR YOU YET.
HEH...

カタン
YOU GIVE YOURSELF TOO LITTLE CREDIT.
BUT I'VE COME TO THINK...
...THAT YOU MAY BE A FAR MORE CAPABLE AND COMPETENT PERSON THAN YOU THINK YOU ARE.
THIS IS PROBABLY THE PROFESSOR'S FAULT. AND MINE.
THE PROFESSOR ONLY EVER KEPT ME BY HIS SIDE.

SOME-DAY...
...THE POWER BURIED DEEP INSIDE YOU...
...WILL FINALLY FIND ITS WAY OUT AND, LIKE A BIRD FREED FROM ITS CAGE...
...RACE FOR THE WIDE-OPEN SKY.
FIRIEL, THIS IS INCREDIBLE! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
YOU'RE ACTUALLY KEEPING UP WITH ALL THESE HARD CLASSES!

YOU MAY HAVE TALKED ABOUT WEIRD THINGS LIKE PUMPKIN COACHES AND STUFF SOMETIMES, BUT WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO IT, YOU'RE ACTUALLY PRETTY SMART, FIRIEL.
Awww!
Oh, and your answer to #6 is wrong
WELL, IT'S NOT LIKE I HAD ANYTHING ELSE TO DO BUT STUDY.
Everybody totally ignored me and all...
I MEAN, RUNE IS OBVIOUSLY A GENIUS.
HE BEAT LORD EUSIS AT CHESS...
...AFTER TWO WEEKS! LORD EUSIS!
YOU NEED TO PICK SOMEONE ELSE TO COMPARE YOURSELF TO.
NOT REALLY.
RUNE JUST HAS TO READ A BOOK AND HE'S MEMORIZED IT.
FIND SOMEONE ELSE TO COMPARE MYSELF TO...?
SINCE I WAS SO BAD AT MATH, THE PROFESSOR WOULDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH ME.
I'D ALWAYS THOUGHT I WAS USELESS AND STUPID.
IF THERE'S ANYTHING I'M GOOD AT, IT'S...

FOLLOW THE MUSIC...!
AND JUMP!

WOW!
THAT WAS SO GORGEOUS!
HOW DID YOU LEARN TO JUMP SO HIGH?
THAT PLAN JUST MAY WORK, MADAM PRESIDENT.
EVANGELINE BELIEVES IN FIRIEL'S POTENTIAL.
YES ...!
WITH HER HELPING US, IT JUST MIGHT BE POSSIBLE...!

THIS MIRROR IS SO BIG.
BACK AT HOME, IN THE VILLAGE SCHOOL, THERE WAS ONLY ONE SMALL ONE HANGING ON THE WALL.
AND THERE'S NOT JUST ONE, BUT A WHOLE WALL OF THEM. MIRRORS ARE SO EXPENSIVE, THIS MANY MUST BE WORTH A FORTUNE.
THERE ARE EVEN MORE THAN THIS AT HIERAGLION.
THEY COVER THE WALLS AND CEILINGS OF EVERY HALL AND CORRIDOR.
IT'S SAID THEIR REFLECTIONS CAUSE SUCH CONFUSION THAT NEW COURTIERS OFTEN GET LOST.
WHY WOULD ANYONE WANT TO PUT UP THAT MANY MIRRORS?

I'M NOT SURE. PERHAPS IT IS SO THAT NO MATTER WHERE YOU LOOK, YOU CAN ALWAYS SEE YOURSELF. SO THAT YOU CAN KEEP A FIRM GRASP ON PRECISELY WHO YOU ARE.
THOSE WHO CANNOT DO SO FIND ONLY A SHORT, UNPLEASANT FATE AWAITING THEM AT COURT.
YOUR APPEAR-ANCE. YOUR ACTIONS.
THE CROWD OF NOBILITY AROUND YOU. YOUR RANK, AND HOW IT COMPARES AGAINST THEIRS.
MISREAD ONE THING AND YOUR DOWNFALL WILL BE SWIFT.
BUT, WITH YOUR OWN IMAGE AROUND...
...YOU CAN ALWAYS TAKE A CLOSE LOOK AT YOURSELF...
...AND DETERMINE EXACTLY WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT DO. EVERYTHING STEMS FROM A STRONG KNOWLEDGE OF WHO YOU YOURSELF ARE.

TAKE A LOOK IN THIS MIRROR.
WHAT DO YOU SEE?
YOU'RE FAR MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN ME, VINCENT.
OH? WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?
YOU CAN SEE THE SELF-CONFIDENCE IN YOUR EYES.
WELL, YOU'RE REALLY MATURE AND INTELLIGENT.
I MEAN IT! YOU HAVE REALLY PRETTY BLUE EYES!
BUT, IF I LOOK BEAUTIFUL TO YOU...
...IT IS ONLY BECAUSE I KNOW MYSELF SO WELL.
THANK YOU.

YOU, HOWEVER, ARE NOT YET THAT FAMILIAR WITH WHO YOU REALLY ARE.
ARE YOU AWARE OF HOW BRILLIANTLY YOUR HAIR SHINES IN THE LIGHT?
YOUR POSTURE IS PERFECT.
EVERY MOVEMENT YOU MAKE HAS A LIVELY SPRING TO IT.
WHILE ALL OF US MAY BE DANCING THE SAME STEPS, DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY EYES ARE IMMEDIATELY DRAWN TO YOU AND ONLY YOU?
WHAT I AM ATTEMPTING TO SAY, FIRIEL...

...IS THAT THERE IS AN UNFATHOMABLE AMOUNT OF POWER DORMANT WITHIN YOU.
YET YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO USE THAT POWER.
YOU ENROLLED HERE AT THE ACADEMY
WHICH MEANS YOU ULTIMATELY WISH TO FIND A POSITION IN HIERAGLION, CORRECT?
IT IS NOT A KIND NOR FORGIVING PLACE BY ANY STRETCH OF THE IMAGINATION.
FOR YOU TO DIVE INTO THE ROYAL COURT AS DEFENSELESS AS YOU ARE NOW IS UNTHINKABLE. IT IS ENTIRELY TOO DANGEROUS FOR YOU.
SHE MAY HAVE POWER...
...BUT IT IS RAW AND UNTESTED.
IF YOU DO NOT KNOW HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF THERE, YOU WILL LOSE EVERYTHING PRECIOUS TO YOU.

YES.
YOU DON'T WANT THAT TO HAPPEN, CORRECT?
I NEVER...
...WANT TO LOSE ANYONE IMPORTANT TO ME EVER AGAIN!
THAT'S WHY I CAME TO THE ACADEMY IN THE FIRST PLACE!
WELL, THEN...
...PLEASE ALLOW ME TO ASSIST YOU.
IGRAINE!

THIS IS IGRAINE. SHE'S A FOURTH-YEAR STUDENT, ONE YEAR YOUNGER THAN US.
Wow, she's tall. .
IGRAINE, FIRIEL HAS NEVER USED A SWORD BEFORE.
TEACH HER FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, OKAY?
IT IS A PLEASURE.

SWORDS ?!
Hy, what a big mouth
THIS YEAR'S HOLY PLAY WAS INTERRUPTED AND NEVER FINISHED, REMEMBER?
IT IS A TAURUS ACADEMY TRADITION THAT ANYONE DISSATISFIED WITH THE HOLY PLAY DURING THE SUMMER EQUINOX FESTIVAL CAN CHALLENGE THE PLAY'S KNIGHT ONE MONTH LATER, DURING THE HARVEST MAIDEN FESTIVAL.
"CHAL-LENGE" ...?
YOU DON'T MEAN...
YES, TO A SWORD DUEL.
THIS YEAR'S KNIGHT IS RAVENNA, OF COURSE.
NEED I SAY WHO THE CHALLENGER WILL BE? ♡
THERE'S NO WAY I COULD CHALLENGE HER!!
THIS IS A GAME, FIRIEL-- REMEMBER?

YOU EVEN SAID IT YOURSELF.
THE SEGREGATED RULE OF THE STUDENT COUNCIL IS NOTHING MORE THAN A "STUPID POWER GAME."
WELL, IF THE STUDENT COUNCIL WANTS TO USE ITS INFLUENCE TO MAKE THE ACADEMY THEIR PLAYTHING ...
...THEN WE SHALL JUST HAVE TO USE OUR OWN TALENTS TO TAKE IT BACK FROM THEM AND RESTORE THE ACADEMY TO ITS PAST FREEDOM.
WE WILL AWAKEN THAT POWER SLEEPING INSIDE YOU, FIRIEL, AND SHOW YOU HOW TO USE IT TO THE FULLEST.
IN THE END, WE WILL BE THE WINNERS OF THIS LITTLE POPULARITY CONTEST.

Chapter 12: The Hidden Garden

THERE'S TOO MUCH HESITATION IN YOUR ATTACKS!
LUNGE IN WITHOUT FLINCHING...!
huff
huff
THAT WILL BE ENOUGH FOR TODAY.

IT APPEARS THAT MORE THAN LUCK SAVED HER FROM A FALL DURING THE HOLY PLAY.
SHE HAS INCREDIBLY GOOD INSTINCTS.
HER ATHLETIC ABILITY IS ALSO QUITE IMPRESSIVE.
HOW IS FIRIEL PROGRES-SING?
THERE'S JUST ONE MONTH-- WILL SHE BE READY FOR THE FESTIVAL?
EXCELLENT! THEN SHE--
SHE'S THE TYPE OF STUDENT ANY INSTRUCTOR WOULD LOVE TO HAVE.
NO.
AT THIS RATE, FIRIEL WILL NEVER DEFEAT RAVENNA.
ズキ
OW!

IF YOU REMAIN AS YOU ARE, YOU WILL EVENTUALLY LOSE EVERYTHING YOU HOLD DEAR.
TAKE UP THE SWORD, AND I KNOW YOU WILL SHINE BRILLIANTLY.
YOU'RE COVERED WITH BRUISES!
WHATEVER POSSESSED YOU TO ACCEPT THEIR OFFER, FIRIEL?
"WE WILL AWAKEN THE POWER SLEEPING WITHIN YOU."
I'VE GOT TO LEARN IT TO BE ABLE TO PROTECT MY LOVED ONES.
I'M FINE.

FIRIEL, YOUR CHESS IS LACKING.
YOU DON'T HAVE THE PURE GREED NEEDED TO GRAB VICTORY NO MATTER WHAT THE METHODS OR COST.
AND YOU DON'T HAVE THE SLY CUNNING NEEDED TO DECEIVE YOUR OPPONENT AND STEAL VICTORY OUT FROM UNDER HIS NOSE.
THESE ARE THINGS YOU MUST HAVE IF YOU'RE GOING TO SURVIVE AT HIERAGLION.
YES, FIRIEL.
WHAT YOU ARE MISSING IS AN UNRELENTING DESIRE TO WIN.
LET US CALL IT THE "FIGHTING SPIRIT."

HER BURNING DESIRE TO WIN SWEEPS THROUGH THE ACADEMY LIKE A WILDFIRE.
RAVENNA IS THE FIGHTING SPIRIT MADE FLESH.
SHE DOESN'T CARE WHO GETS SACRIFICED AS LONG AS SHE MOVES CLOSER TO HER GOAL...!
WHAT A USELESS ENDEAVOR.
Yikes!
SO SOMEONE HAS BEEN TEACHING DOGS TO WIELD SWORDS.
WHAT A SURPRISE, IGRAINE.
YOU LOST THE CHARISMA GAME TO ME ONCE...

...WHEN ROSELITTE CHOSE ME OVER YOU.
IGRAINE KNEW ROSELITTE?
AND DON'T THINK I WILL EVER FORGIVE YOU!!

NOT FOR...
...THE STUDENT COUNCIL'S WAY OF ELIMINATING ANYONE WHO DARES DISAGREE WITH THEM!
...AND THEN JUST LETTING HER DIE!!
OR FOR USING ROSE-LITTE'S AMBITION THAT WAY...
THAT IS YOUR FAULT, IGRAINE. YOU JUST DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH INFLUENCE TO BRING HER BACK TO YOU.
TAKING A WEAK LITTLE GIRL AND FOISTING HER ONSTAGE IN FRONT OF ME NOW ISN'T GOING TO CHANGE ANYTHING.
THERE WILL BE ONLY ONE WINNER AFTER THE FESTIVAL. ME. AND THROUGH ME, THE STUDENT COUNCIL.
Ah Ha Ha Ha
IGRAINE...
IGRAINE, WERE YOU... CLOSE TO ROSELITTE?

I HAD HOPED TO WIN HER BACK BEFORE SOMETHING BAD HAPPENED...!
I KNOW THE PAIN OF LOSING SOMEONE PRECIOUS TO YOU...
WE WERE ALWAYS TOGETHER, SINCE THE DAY WE BOTH ARRIVED HERE.

IGRAINE, TRAIN ME!
I LIKED ROSELITTE A LOT, TOO.
SHE HAD VERY CLEAR, DETERMINED EYES.
I WANT TO DO EVERYTHING I CAN--FOR HER SAKE!

EVERYONE LOOKS SO EXCITED.
What kind of class is this. ?
LOOK! IT'S SISTER LAIN!
EVERYONE CALLS HER THE HOLY MOTHER OF MERCY.

I HOPE YOU ALL UNDERSTOOD HOW THE POWER STRUCTURE OF A KINGDOM'S GOVERNMENT CAN INFLUENCE A GENTLEMAN'S PERSONALITY AND DISPOSITION.
...I EXPLAINED THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OUR OWN GRAAL AND OTHER COUNTRIES SUCH AS TOLBAT OR THE BRIGION EMPIRE.
IN OUR PREVIOUS LESSON...
...? IS THIS A HISTORY CLASS, MAYBE?
TODAY'S LESSON WILL EXPAND ON THAT POINT. I WILL TEACH YOU SEVERAL POSSIBLE MEANS OF APPROACHING DIFFERENT TYPES OF GENTLEMEN.
?
HER VOICE HASN'T A SHADE OF INFLECTION. SHE LOOKS YOUNG, BUT SHE'S ABOUT AS LIVELY AS A STATUE.
IN EASTERN COUNTRIES, SUCH AS THE BRIGION EMPIRE, MANY GENTLEMEN DESIRE TO DOMINATE.

Gulp...
I WILL BEGIN OUR NEXT LESSON BY EXPLAINING THE PROPER DOSAGES FOR VARIOUS SITUATIONS.
...WHILE ALLOWING YOU TO SUBTLY INTRODUCE THE IDEA OF AN AFFAIR.
IN SUCH SITUATIONS, USE OF AN APHRODISIAC IS AN EFFECTIVE TACTIC. IT MAKES IT SIMPLER TO MAINTAIN THE ILLUSION THAT THE GENTLEMAN IS THE ONE IN CONTROL...

BUT... UM...DOES THAT MEAN THAT ALL NOBLE LADIES... UH...
...HANDLE FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND STUFF THROUGH... SEDUCTION?
← Had everything explained to her by Marie

EXACTLY!

I CAN'T BELIEVE THERE'S EVEN A CLASS ABOUT THAT HERE!
BUT SINCE THE STUDENTS HERE ARE THE FUTURE MASTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN!
VERY EXCITED

GRAAL IS THE LAND OF QUEENS, YOU KNOW.
JUST AS KNIGHTS TAKE PRIDE IN THEIR SWORDSMANSHIP, LADIES TAKE PRIDE IN THEIR CHARISMA, AND USE IT AS A WEAPON.
BESIDES, IT'S ONLY NATURAL FOR A PERSON TO HONE AND USE THEIR NATURAL TALENTS.
OH. I SEE.
I THINK IT'S BETTER IF PEOPLE COULD GET MARRIED TO PEOPLE THEY LOVE, LIKE MY PARENTS EDILÈNE AND PROFESSOR DEE DIO.
BUT LISTENING TO VINCENT EXPLAIN THE LOGIC OF IT, I CAN KIND OF SEE THE POINT TO THAT SIDE OF IT, TOO.
I AM TRULY VERY GLAD YOU CAME TO THE ACADEMY, FIRIEL.
EVER SINCE EVA GRADUATED, THE STUDENT COUNCIL'S POWER HAS GROWN DAILY.
THERE ARE RUMORS THAT SOMEONE IS BEHIND THEM, PULLING THEIR STRINGS.
BUT WE'VE BEEN UNABLE TO TIP THE BALANCE OF POWER AWAY.

THINGS ARE FINALLY STARTING TO BECOME INTERESTING!
VIN-CENT...
...YOU SEEM AWFULLY HAPPY ABOUT THE SITUA-TION RIGHT NOW.
YOUR PRESENCE ALONE IS CAUSING A SENSATION THAT WILL ROCK THE ACADEMY TO ITS CORE, FIRIEL!
A LARGE NUMBER OF THE STUDENTS HERE ARE NOT HAPPY WITH THE TYRANNY OF THE STUDENT COUNCIL.
BUT THEN YOU ARRIVED, FIRIEL, BRINGING US ONE OF EVA'S NOVELLAS AND ANY NUMBER OF COMPELLING MYSTERIES!
NOW THAT EVERYONE KNOWS YOU'RE THIS YEAR'S CHALLENGER...
...THE ENTIRE ACADEMY IS WAVERING. NOW IS OUR BEST CHANCE TO REGAIN POWER.
DOESN'T ROSELITTE'S DEATH BOTHER YOU?

FIRIEL...
IF I SAID IT DID NOT, WOULD YOU RESIGN YOUR POSITION AS CHALLENGER?
NO.
JUST...IF IT REALLY MEANS NOTHING TO YOU...
...THEN YOU WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND THE WAY I FEEL.

...AND THE STRENGTH AND JOY OF BELIEVING IN SOMETHING.
I WILL NOT SAY A PERSON'S LIFE IS UNIMPORTANT
HOWEVER, YOU DO NEED TO REALIZE ..
...THAT JUST AS IN HIERAGLION, ASSASSINATION IS NOT UNCOMMON AT THE ACADEMY.
VINCENT IS CORRECT.
...YOU SOMETIMES REMIND ME OF HER...
"WHEN YOU READ A NOVEL, YOUR RANK AND PERSONAL APPEARANCE DON'T MATTER IN THE LEAST."
"I WANT TO MAKE GRAAL A COUNTRY WHERE EVERYONE CAN BE HAPPY, NO MATTER WHAT THEIR SOCIAL CLASS."
"...BUT I DO NOT WISH TO RULE PEOPLE. I JUST WANT TO MAKE THEM HAPPY."
"YOU MAY CALL ME SOFT, VINCENT..."
HOW ODD.
EVEN THOUGH YOU AND EVA ARE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT...

ROSELITTE WAS NOT INNOCENT. SHE KNEW THE RISKS, AND STILL SHE CHOSE THE DANGER.
HERE, DANGER AND AMBITION ARE DIRECTLY PROPORTIONATE.
EVERY GIRL WHO ENROLLS KNOWS THAT.
IGRAINE...
I'LL BE FINE, FIRIEL.
THANK YOU, FOR GETTING ANGRY FOR ROSELITTE'S SAKE.
I WAS VERY GLAD THAT YOU DID.

IS IT JUST ME, OR ARE THERE MORE WATCHERS OUT THERE EVERY DAY?
Hee hee!
Hee!
Igraine!
WE WOULD BE ETERNALLY GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD READ THESE LETTERS!
SISTER FIRIEL!

"TO MY BELOVED SISTER FIRIEL."
"HAVE YOU AND SISTER IGRAINE EXCHANGED VOWS ON THE STAR TERRACE YET?"
HMM...
WHAT DO THEY MEAN BY THAT?
IT SEEMS THEY'VE GOTTEN THE IMPRESSION FROM WATCHING YOU TWO PRACTICE SWORDPLAY THAT YOU TWO ARE INTIMATE.
LADY ADALE'S NOVELLA IS PROBABLY PARTLY TO BLAME, TOO.
INTI-MATE...?
ADALE'S BOOK? WHY?
BECAUSE IT'S A PASSIONATE AND HEARTBREAKING LOVE STORY ABOUT A RED-HAIRED KNIGHT...
...AND A BLACK-HAIRED HERETIC BOY.
YOU'RE A REDHEAD, AND SHE IS PRETTY KNIGHTLY, AFTER ALL. EVERYONE IS PROBABLY SEEING THE TWO MAIN CHARACTERS IN YOU TWO.

A PASSIONATE AND HEART-BREAKING LOVE STORY ABOUT WHO??!!
I MEAN, THIS IS AN ALL-GIRLS' SCHOOL AFTER A--
Firiel, you're scaring me.

ADAAALE...!!
ヒィ…？
FIRI--
YEEEK!!
WHAT WAS THAT FOR?
S-SORRY...
I FOUND THIS ON THE FLOOR IN FRONT OF MY ROOM.
"TO MY DEAR SISTER RUNETTE."

FIRIEL, WE DON'T REALLY NEED TO BE FOLLOWING RUNETTE AROUND
SHH!
THAT LETTER WAS TOO SUSPICIOUS TO IGNORE! IT SOUNDED LIKE WHOEVER WROTE IT KNEW THE TRUTH ABOUT RUNETTE!
"YOUR FACE IS AS LOVELY AND SERENE AS THE STARS."
"MOST WOULD NOT GUESS THE MANY SECRETS BEHIND YOUR MODESTY."
"I KNOW YOU ARE GIFTED."
"BECAUSE I AM ALWAYS WATCHING YOU."
I HAVE A REALLY BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS!
"YOUR ETERNAL SERVANT. SIGNED, L."
Yeesh
Firiel's like an overprotective mother hen

LAGRANGE'S "ANALYTICAL MECHANICS"
SO THERE IS SOMEONE WHO WOULD READ IT. AND HERE I HAD THOUGHT SUCH A GEM WAS WASTED ON THIS PLACE
SISTER LAIN...?

NO WAY!
SISTER LAIN ISN'T THE SORT OF PERSON WHO'D EVER WRITE A LOVE LETTER.
NO WAY...! DON'T TELL ME "L" IS REALLY SISTER LAIN...!
YOU ARE A GIFTED STUDENT.
AS THEIR ADVISOR, I WILL RECOM-MEND YOU TO THEM.
RUNETTE, WHY DON'T YOU JOIN THE STUDENT COUNCIL?
IS THERE SOMETHING YOU WISH TO SPEAK WITH ME ABOUT, SISTER LAIN?
IT'S TOO DARK. I CAN'T SEE HER FACE...
NO, THANK YOU.
I HAVE NO INTENTION OF EVER JOINING THE PEOPLE WHO BULLIED FIRIEL.
THEN SIMPLY DON'T TELL THE LITTLE RED KITTEN.

!
WHO ARE YOU?!
LET US SHARE OUR SECRETS RUNETTE
SUCH AS THE ONE YOU KEEP ABOUT THE EPHEMERIS...
...AND THE GROUP THAT IS CHASING YOU, THE CIRCLE OF HERMES.

IF YOU HAVE ANY FEELINGS FOR THE KITTEN AT ALL...
...YOU WILL OBEY MY ORDERS.
huff
huff
huff
huff
YOU HAVE NO CONCEN-TRATION TODAY!
WHAT'S DISTRACTING YOU? WHERE IS YOUR MIND GOING?

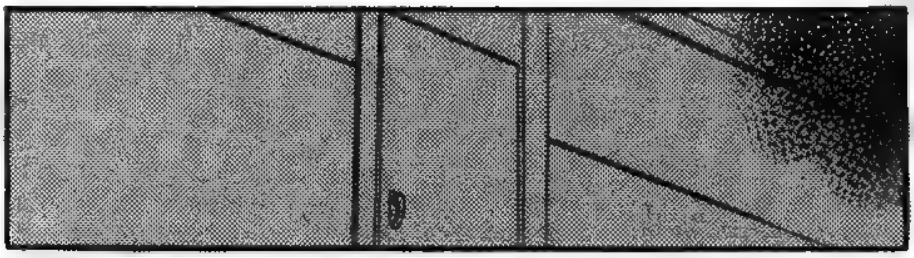
YOU DIDN'T ANSWER ME AT PRACTICE, FIRIEL. WHAT HAS GOT SUCH A HOLD ON YOUR THINKING?
WE NEVER DID FIND OUT WHO SENT THAT LETTER TO RUNE.
NOW I'M REALLY CURIOUS.
I WOULD LOVE TO KNOW WHAT KIND OF PERSON COULD SNARE YOUR HEART.
SOMETHING YOU COULDN'T IMAGINE, IGRAINE.

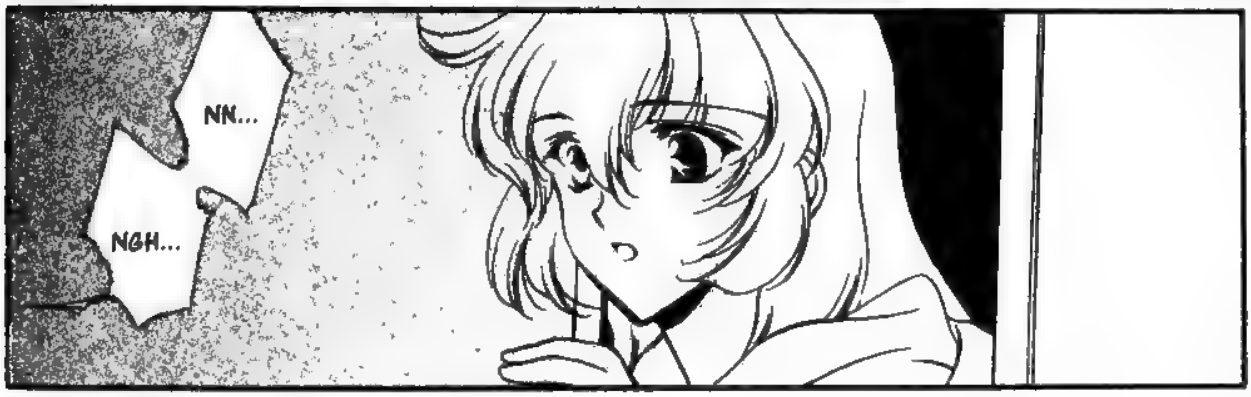
YOU HAVE A BRILLIANT GLOW TO YOU TODAY, FIRIEL.
EVEN BRIGHTER THAN WHEN YOU ARRIVED.
THAT'S BECAUSE SOMEONE HAS CAPTURED YOUR HEART, RIGHT?
ROSELITTE WAS THE SAME WAY.
WHEN A GIRL FINDS SOMEONE TO WHOM TO GIVE HER HEART, SHE BECOMES FAR MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN SHE WAS BEFORE.
EYES... SKIN... VOICE...
EVERY PART OF HER TAKES ON A SHINE IT DIDN'T HAVE BEFORE.

I THINK YOU HAVE THE TOTALLY WRONG IDEA, IGRAINE.
IS THAT SO?
ACTUALLY, I'M HAPPY TO HEAR THAT IS THE CASE...
...BECAUSE I'M VERY FOND OF THE BRAVE WOMAN YOU'RE BECOMING.

AFTER HE LEFT THE LIBRARY...
...RUNE WASN'T LOOKING SO GOOD.
IT'S NOTHING.

I THINK I'LL GO CHECK ON HIM LATER.




NN...
NGH...

RUNE?
NGK!
RUNE? RUNE!
AGH...
NH...
WHAT TERRIBLE MOANS!
WHAT KIND OF NIGHTMARE IS HE HAVING?
NGH!
UPH!

GYAAA

...DREAM AGAIN...
hff...
DAMMIT ...!!
"LET'S PLAY CHESS."
HE SCARED ME SO BADLY JUST NOW...
...THE REASON YOU KEPT COMING TO MY ROOM TO PLAY CHESS LATE EVERY NIGHT IS BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T WANT TO SLEEP?
WAIT, DON'T TELL ME...
bmp

HIS EYES WERE SO... BLANK.
IT WAS LIKE HIS SOUL HAD GONE SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY.
ドキン
ドキン
ドキン
IF YOU'RE HAVING BAD DREAMS...
...THEN I'LL STAY WITH YOU AND HOLD YOUR HAND ALL NIGHT, IF NEED BE.
JUST LIKE I DID WHEN WE WERE LITTLE.
YOU'RE ENTIRELY TOO TRUSTING, FIRIEL!
AGAIN
BUT...
...WHY WOULD I HAVE TO GUARD MYSELF AROUND YOU, RUNE?
ドキン
THAT BLANK LOOK AGAIN. IT'S LIKE HE'S SOMEBODY I DON'T KNOW...
GET OUT!!

RUNE! WHY DO YOU HAVE TO BE SO STUBBORN ALL THE TIME?
I MEAN, YOU'RE SHAKING LIKE A LEAF!

YOU TRY SO HARD TO DO EVERYTHING YOU CAN FOR OTHERS...
...BUT YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN CARELESS WHEN IT COMES TO YOURSELF.
ALWAYS!
DO YOU STILL SEE ME AS NOTHING MORE THAN A LITTLE BROTHER?

Chapter 13: Captured Princess

NN...
NNH...
Ahooo

WHERE'D YOU LEARN HOW TO DO THAT?
AREN'T THERE OTHER THINGS YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE SAYING AT A TIME LIKE THIS?
WHO TAUGHT YOU ALL THAT WHEN I WASN'T AROUND?!
LIKE WHAT? I MEAN, THIS JUST ISN'T RIGHT!

THERE'S A MOUNTAIN OF THINGS I'VE DONE WHEN YOU WEREN'T AROUND, FIRIEL.
OH, MY GOSH, WHAT AM I THINKING?
Yeep!
LORD ELSIS?!
NO! WAS IT...

slam
WHY'D HE GET SO ANGRY?
I'M THE ONE WHO SHOULD BE SHOCKED!
HE'S THE ONE WHO DID... THAT, ALL OF A SUDDEN.
BUT NOW, HE SUDDENLY ACTS LIKE A MAN...
RUNE'S FAMILIAR SCENT...THE ONE PERSON I'VE KNOWN BETTER THAN ANYBODY, EVER SINCE WE WERE LITTLE.
...AND KNOWS HOW LOVERS ARE SUPPOSED TO KISS AND STUFF...
IT'S NOT FAIR...

FIRIEL, WHAT'S WRONG?
YOU LOOK SO PALE THIS MORNING.
I COULDN'T SLEEP.
RU-NETTE'S ABSENT TODAY, TOO.
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN TO YOU TWO?
IT'S ALL RUNETTE'S FAULT.
HE WAS THE ONE WHO KISSED ME THAT WAY, AFTER ALL.
Jeez!
YOU TWO CAN'T FIGHT AT A TIME LIKE THIS!
IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG AND RUNETTE GETS IN TROUBLE, YOU'RE THE ONLY PERSON WHO'D NOTICE IN TIME.
I MEAN, SHE WAS ACTING REALLY WEIRD YESTERDAY, REMEMBER?

IT'S LIKE THE PERSON WHO WAS ALWAYS CLOSEST TO ME...
...I JUST DON'T KNOW HOW TO ACT AROUND HER ANY MORE.
BUT...
...HAS SUDDENLY DRIFTED SO TERRIBLY FAR AWAY.
AH...!
カラン...

ENOUGH. LET'S END THESE LESSONS.
YOU DON'T NEED TO PRACTICE ANY MORE, EITHER.
IGRAINE! WAIT!
YOU'RE A BEGINNER, SO I'D HARDLY CALL THIS A SLUMP...
YOU'VE BEEN ABSENTMINDED FOR DAYS.
...BUT REGARDLESS, TRYING TO TEACH YOU NOW IS A WASTE OF MY TIME.

Ah!
YOU ARE IN NO CONDITION TO HOLD A SWORD TODAY.
COME BACK ONCE YOU HAVE DEALT WITH WHATEVER IT IS THAT IS EATING AT YOUR HEART.
YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO CRY NOW.
YOU ARE THE FOCUS OF THE ENTIRE ACADEMY'S ATTENTION.

I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO PROTECT ANYONE LIKE THIS!
EVERYTHING INSIDE MY HEART IS ONE BIG, CONFUSED MESS!
BUT I DON'T HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT TO DO!
IGRAINE...
PERHAPS THE BEST THING FOR YOU TO DO IS SIMPLY LISTEN TO YOUR HEART AND ACT UPON YOUR FEELINGS.
SO WHEN YOU WAVER, IT SHOWS TWICE AS MUCH AS IT WOULD ON ANOTHER.
AT YOUR CORE, YOU ARE A VERY GENTLE PERSON, FIRIEL.

MARIE AND IGRAINE ARE RIGHT.
NOW ISN'T THE TIME FOR RUNE AND ME TO BE ALL AWKWARD AROUND EACH OTHER.
ガチャ
RU--
WE NEED TO SIT DOWN AND TALK THIS OUT.

IT LOOKED LIKE SOME BEAST'S CLAWS HAD RIPPED ACROSS HIS SKIN, DOZENS AND DOZENS OF TIMES...
...AND THE ANGRY RED BURNS ON HIS CHEST...
HE WAS BRANDED?!

A STAR AND TWO SNAKES TWISTED AROUND A STAFF...
THE STAFF OF THE SERPENT...
THEY GAVE YOU ALL THOSE SCARS, DIDN'T THEY...?
THAT'S SO CRUEL...!

I KNEW IT.
I KNEW YOU WOULD CRY.
WHY?!
WHY DID YOU KEEP QUIET ABOUT SOMETHING LIKE THIS?!
WERE YOU GOING TO TRY TO KEEP SOMETHING THIS HORRIBLE A SECRET FROM ME FOREVER?!
THAT'S WHY I DIDN'T WANT TO LET YOU SEE.
I'M FINE, FIRIEL.

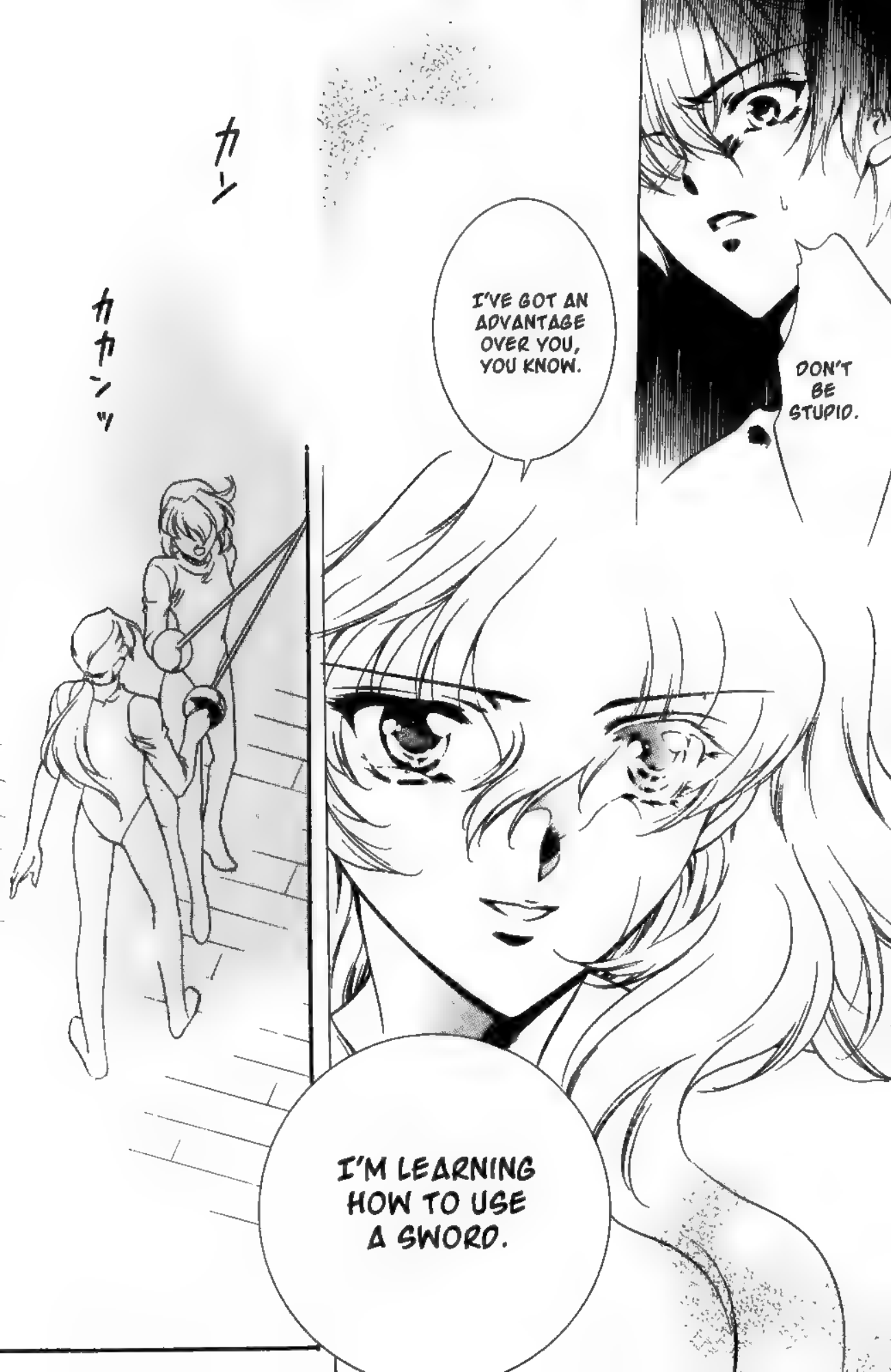
FIRIEL, THESE ARE MY SCARS. NOT YOURS.
THERE'S NO NEED FOR YOU TO GIVE IN TO THE HATRED.
JUST ME ALONE IS ENOUGH.
I WON'T GET ANOTHER PEACEFUL NIGHT'S SLEEP UNTIL I'VE KILLED EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM.

THEY WON'T GET AWAY WITH THIS.
I'LL NEVER FORGIVE THEM FOR WHAT THEY DID TO YOU.
NEVER!

I DON'T WANT MY DARKNESS TO STAIN YOUR LIGHT!!
IT ISN'T ANY OF YOUR BUSINESS.
BUT THIS ISN'T SOMETHING YOU NEED TO SHARE WITH ME, FIRIEL.
AS LONG AS A SINGLE ONE OF THEM LIVES, THIS GRUDGE WON'T SUBSIDE.
BURY THE SEED DEEP INSIDE... FEED IT WITH HATRED...
NURSE IT... RAISE IT... MAKE IT GROW INTO A BLACK TREE...
I AM FULLY AWARE OF HOW BLACK MY THOUGHTS ARE, AND HOW DESPICABLE MY DESIRES ARE.
"NEVER FORGET..."
"...YOU BELONG TO US!"
FIRIEL...
I DON'T THINK YOU COULD EVER IMAGINE WHAT HAPPENED TO ME.
THEY USED EVERY KIND OF TORTURE EXCEPT DEATH...
...TO CARVE THEIR MARK ON MY BODY.

TELL ME TO KEEP MY NOSE OUT OF IT ONE MORE TIME AND I SWEAR I'LL SLAP YOU, RUMPELSTILTZKIN.
IF NONE OF THIS WAS ANYBODY ELSE'S BUSINESS, THEN WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
YOU THINK BECAUSE YOU'RE GOING SOME-PLACE DANGER-OUS...
...YOU CAN LEAVE ME BEHIND? WELL, YOU'RE DEAD WRONG.
WHOSE RESEARCH MADE SOMEBODY WANT TO GIVE YOU ALL THOSE SCARS?
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THAT WHEN YOU'RE HURT AND BLEEDING AND ALL ALONE IN THE DARK...
...I COULD JUST SIT PEACEFULLY SOMEWHERE ELSE AND SMILE HAPPILY?!

WE'VE BEEN AS CLOSE AS SIBLINGS...
...EVER SINCE WE WERE LITTLE.
NO. WE WERE EVEN CLOSER THAN THAT.
I WILL NEVER, EVER FORGIVE ANYONE WHO DARES HURT YOU, RUNE.
IF THERE'S SOMEONE OUT THERE THAT YOU WANT TO KILL, THEN IT'S ONLY NATURAL THAT I WANT TO KILL THEM, TOO.


カーン
カカンッ
DON'T BE STUPID.
I'VE GOT AN ADVANTAGE OVER YOU, YOU KNOW.
I'M LEARNING HOW TO USE A SWORD.

HER LUNGES ARE SMARTER, SHARPER.
EVERY MOVE IS CONFIDENT.
SHE IS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PERSON THAN SHE WAS YESTERDAY.
WHAT CHANGED HER SO MUCH IN ONE NIGHT?

カラァン…

FIRIEL...
ONE MORE ROUND!
...I THINK THERE MAY BE SOMETHING INCREDIBLE LURKING DEEP INSIDE OF YOU.
AS YOU WISH.
FIRIEL...
Kya!
Kya!

SHE WENT OFF WITH LADY LYTICIA JUST A MINUTE AGO.
I THINK THEY WERE GOING TO THE STUDENT COUNCIL ROOM.
FIRIEL ?!
SHE ALWAYS SITS OVER IN THAT CORNER, WATCHING CLASS.
WHERE'S RUNETTE?
AFTER YOU.
HUH?!
Why?
IF THE STUDENT COUNCIL GETS THEIR HANDS ON HER, THEY'LL STRIP HER NAKED!

カン
カン
カン
YOU!
SISTER LAIN?!
I'M GLAD YOU CAME, RUNETTE.

THIS IS THAT EMOTIONLESS STATUE SISTER LAIN?!
SHE LOOKS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT!
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU...
...RUNETTE.
A GIFTED STUDENT SUCH AS YOURSELF IS WASTED ANYWHERE BUT ON THE STUDENT COUNCIL.
NEVER MIND YOUR TRUE SEX.

HER VOICE...!
IT SLIDES ITS WAY INSIDE ME, MAKING ME FEEL SO GOOD...
WHO ARE YOU?!
Heh heh
THE HOLY MOTHER OF MERCY, HMM?
HAVING A NICKNAME SO UTTERLY OPPOSITE OF WHAT I TRULY AM IS ACTUALLY QUITE AMUSING.
GIVE ME THE EPHEMERIS AND I SHALL TELL YOU ANYTHING YOU WANT TO KNOW.
YOU'RE PART OF THE CIRCLE OF HERMES?!
SO IT'S NOT JUST MEN, THEN.
OH, PLEASE! DON'T ASSOCIATE ME WITH THAT PACK OF BRUTES.
ONLY MEN HAVE SUCH OBSESSIVE MINDS.

GIVE ME THE EPHEMERIS, AND I SHALL GIVE YOU A PRESENT IN RETURN.
YOU DO WANT TO KNOW THE TRUTH BEHIND HERMES TRIGMEGISTUS, DON'T YOU?
IN OTHER WORDS, TO CONTROL THE EPHEMERIS IS TO HAVE AS MUCH POWER AS THE STAR QUEEN HERSELF, IF NOT MORE.
MY, MY... YOU LOOK SO SURPRISED, RUNETTE.
WHAT, DIDN'T YOU THINK I'D BE SO WELL-INFORMED OF THE CRUCIAL DETAILS OF THE PROFESSOR'S RESEARCH?
PROFESSOR DEE FOUND IT, DIDN'T HE?
HE REDISCOVERED THE ANCIENT ART OF ASTRONOMY AND USED IT TO UNEARTH SOMETHING ONLY QUEEN ASTRAEA HERSELF IS SUPPOSED TO KNOW. THE HIYAKU* TO THAT LITTLE CLOSET OF KNOWLEDGE...
I ALLOW THEM TO EXIST, BECAUSE I CAN USE THEM.
...IS THE EPHEMERIS. I WILL MAKE IT MINE.
WITH IT, I WILL HAVE THE KEY TO THE FATE OF THE ENTIRE WORLD IN MY HANDS--THE REVOLUTIONARY'S STAR!
*HIYAKU IT MEANS "SECRET KEY" IN JAPANESE IT CAN ALSO MEAN THE HINT NEEDED TO UNRAVEL A MYSTERY

I DESIRE YOUR INTELLIGENCE.
AND YOU'RE RATHER CUTE, AS WELL.
YOU LEARNED THE SECRET TECHNIQUES OF ATTRACTION IN CLASS, CORRECT?
BUT THE PERFECT SEDUCTION IS ANOTHER THING ENTIRELY.
HERE. LET ME SHOW YOU AN EXAMPLE.
SISTER! NO, PLEASE! YOU CAN'T LET A... A... BOY...!
IT APPEARS YOUR TRAINING WAS INADEQUATE, RAVENNA.

ぼうっ…
TRUE SEDUCTION AFFECTS BOTH MEN AND WOMEN.

DON'T RUN.
I CAN GRANT YOUR EVERY DESIRE.
MY MIND IS GOING NUMB. I CAN'T THINK...
I CAN SYMPATHIZE WITH YOUR HATRED AND YOUR LONELINESS.
N-NO! I'VE ALREADY DECIDED ON MY ONE AND ONLY-- ON MY YUNA!
SUCH A SWEET SCENT...
SUCH A STUBBORN CHILD.
BUT...
...RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW, YOUR YUNA IS ME.

I... CAN'T...!
IT MUST HAVE BEEN SO TERRIBLE FOR YOU.
BUT EVERY-THING WILL BE ALL RIGHT NOW.
FIRIEL ...!
I ACCEPT EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU.
NOW, JUST RELAX...
crash

GET AWAY FROM RUNETTE RIGHT NOW!!
huff
huff
FIRIEL!
YOU SUCCUBUS!!

ENOUGH.
THIS IS NOT SOMEPLACE YOU BELONG, DOG!
DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM, LITTLE KITTEN?
HA!
A VERY ACCURATE HUNCH!
LEANDRA!
THAT'S JUST A HUNCH, THOUGH.
THIS GIRL...
GET YOUR PAWS OFF RUNETTE RIGHT NOW!

IF YOU DON'T WANT THE ENTIRE ACADEMY TO KNOW THAT "RUNETTE" IS A HE...
...THEN YOU WILL FOLLOW MY EVERY COMMAND.
NO, I DON'T THINK I SHALL.
YOU SEE, HE'S MINE NOW, KITTEN.

Chapter 14:
On the Petaled Stage

LISTEN CAREFULLY, FIRIEL.
YOUR GREATEST WEAPON IS YOUR AGILITY.
USE IT TO DART TO YOUR OPPONENT'S FLANK AND STRIKE HARD!

cling

WHILE SHE MAY LOOK LIKE NOTHING MORE THAN A FEATHERBRAIN, SHE MOST CERTAINLY IS NOT.
RAVENNA, THIS GIRL SHOULD NOT BE CALLED A DOG.
SHE DID DEDUCE MY TRUE IDENTITY ON NOTHING MORE THAN A HUNCH, AFTER ALL.
WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST CLUE, KITTEN?
WELL, YOU'RE REALLY BEAUTIFUL...
...AND, PERSONALITY-WISE, YOU'RE THE TOTAL OPPOSITE OF ADALE.

THOUGH THEY BOTH HAVE THE SAME INTENSE CHARISMA...
...ONE IS AN ANGEL, THE OTHER A DEVIL.
THE TWO QUEENS-IN-WAITING...IN THEIR HANDS THE SAME POWER IS AS DIFFERENT AS NIGHT AND DAY.
IF GRAAL WAS AT PEACE, MY LITTLE SISTER'S WAY MIGHT HAVE A HOPE OF WORKING...
THE ONLY ONE FIT FOR THE THRONE IS ME.

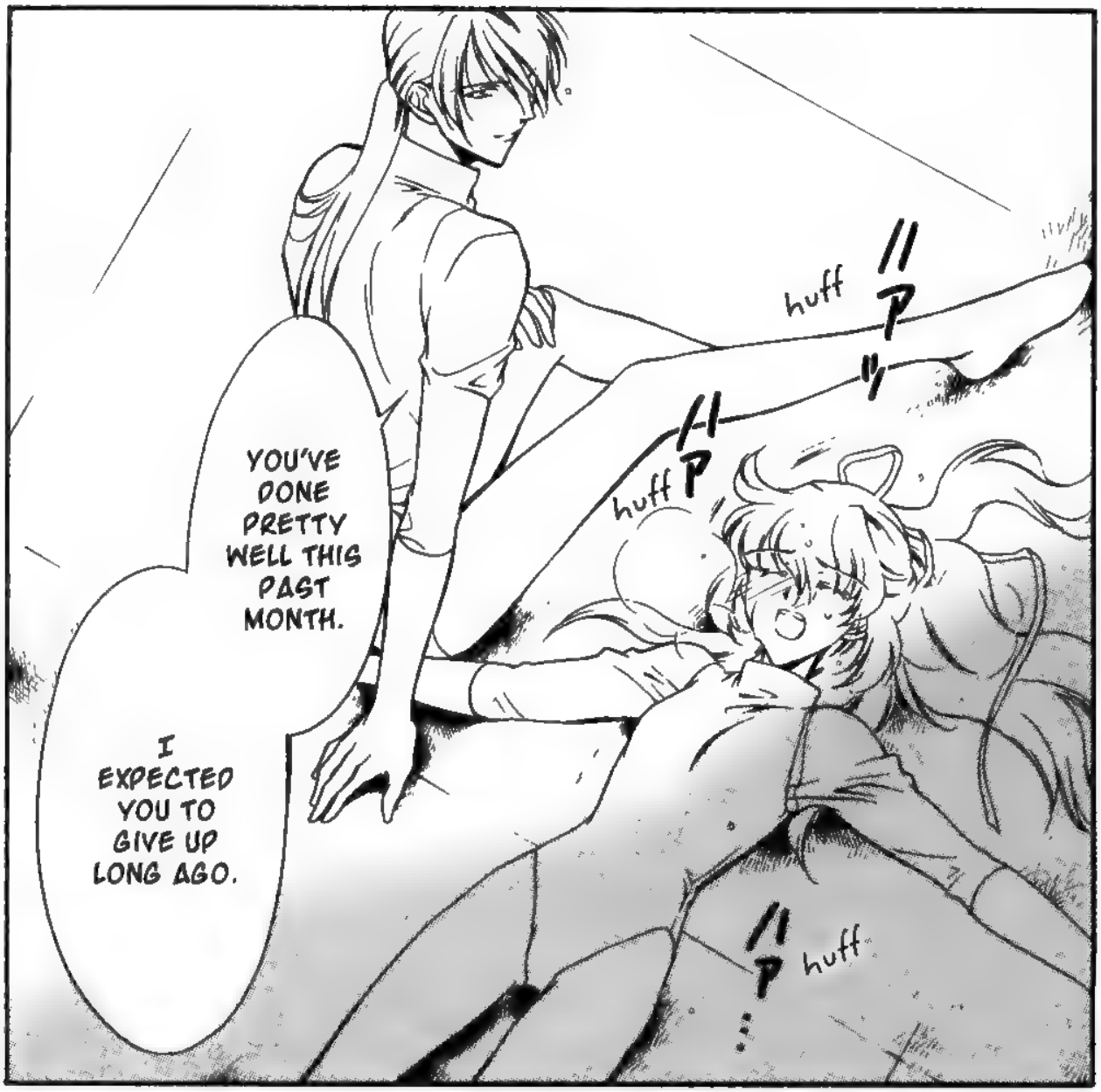
DISASTER?
THERE'S NO WAY ANY DISASTER COULD EVER REALLY DESTROY GRAAL...
BUT THE STAR QUEEN HAS ALWAYS LED US WITH WISDOM AND INTELLIGENCE
GRANDMOTHER IS NOT A GOD.
YOU'LL LEARN THAT SOON ENOUGH.
BUT BACK TO THE QUESTION AT HAND. WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU CAN DO TO STOP ME? EXPOSING "RUNETTE" AS A BOY WOULD BE SIMPLICITY ITSELF FOR ME.
IT'S JUST IMPOSSIBLE FOR YOU TO DENY ME, KITTEN.
SHE JUST SITS, WARM AND CRADLED IN HER MAJESTY'S LAP, AND DREAMS HER FLUFFY, HAPPY DREAMS.
...BUT IT'S NOT. INSTEAD, IT IS FACING DISASTER ON A SCALE NEVER BEFORE SEEN.
ADALE HASN'T DISCOVERED THE DISASTER'S SOURCE YET. SHE DOESN'T KNOW WHO OUR TRUE ENEMY IS.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO LISTEN TO HER, FIRIEL.

LEANDRA...
...JUST BEING HERE AT TAURUS IS AN INCREDIBLY DANGEROUS MOVE ON YOUR PART, ISN'T IT?
IF IT WEREN'T, THERE'D BE NO NEED FOR YOUR DISGUISE AS SISTER LAIN.
BUT FIRIEL'S SEEN THROUGH IT.
I BET HAVING THE ROLAND FAMILY OR THE STAR QUEEN KNOW THAT YOU'RE HERE IS THE LAST THING YOU WANT.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?!
WHAT ARE YOU HOPING TO ACCOMPLISH HERE AT THE ACADEMY?!
DO YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW?
THERE ARE MOMENTS WHEN YOU ARE TERRIBLY UNCUTE, CHILD.
AND HERE I WAS PLAYING NICE.
MARIE KNOWS I CAME HERE.
IF I DON'T COME BACK, SHE'LL BRING VINCENT AND EVERYBODY DOWN HERE AFTER ME!
IF I TELL YOU, YOU MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO LEAVE THIS ROOM ALIVE.

WELL THEN, HOW ABOUT THIS?
HOW INTERESTING...
YOU SAY NOTHING ABOUT MY SECRET, AND WE WILL KEEP QUIET ABOUT YOURS. FOR NOW.
HOWEVER, WE SHALL BET ON YOUR BATTLE ON THE PETALED STAGE. IF YOU WIN, I SHALL GIVE UP RUNETTE.
BUT IF YOU SHOULD LOSE...
HE BELONGS TO THE STUDENT COUNCIL.
THAT IS ENOUGH FOR TODAY.


YOU'VE DONE PRETTY WELL THIS PAST MONTH.
I EXPECTED YOU TO GIVE UP LONG AGO.
huff
huff
huff

TELL ME THE TRUTH, IGRAINE. DO YOU REALLY THINK I CAN BEAT RAVENNA TOMORROW?

YOU KNOW WE'RE ON THE STAR TERRACE, RIGHT?
IT'S WHERE STUDENTS COME TO EXPRESS THEIR FEELINGS FOR ONE ANOTHER.
A LITTLE PRAYER THAT MY SKILLS INFUSE YOU DURING THE DUEL.
IF THE GODDESS SEES FIT TO GRANT YOU PHENOMENAL LUCK, THEN PERHAPS.
クスクス
WELL, THAT WAS HONEST.
SHALL I GIVE YOU A GOOD LUCK CHARM, THEN?
WELL? WOULD YOU LIKE THE CHARM?

I-I-IGRAINE!!
しおしお
YOU DON'T WANT TO?
WELL, UM... THAT'S...
...NOT IT... I...
I MEAN...
...I DON'T MIND...
I GUESS.
THE AIR AROUND HER...
IGRAINE IS USUALLY SO STERN AND TERSE...
...FEELS SO SOFT...
...AND GENTLE.
...BUT RIGHT NOW I CAN TELL JUST HOW MUCH IGRAINE REALLY CARES FOR ME.
SHE DOESN'T HAVE TO SAY ANYTHING, I JUST KNOW...

KISSES...
...ARE MEANT TO MAKE PEOPLE HAPPY LIKE THIS, RIGHT?
RUNETTE!
I'VE BEEN LOOKING ALL OVER FOR YOU! I GOT WORRIED WHEN I COULDN'T FIND YOU IN YOUR ROOM.
I FOUND THIS PLACE CALLED THE STAR TERRACE! THERE'S GOING TO BE A METEOR SHOWER TONIGHT, AND THIS IS THE BEST PLACE TO SEE IT!

DOES IT ALWAYS HAVE TO BE ASTRONOMY WITH YOU?
CAN'T IT BE ANYTHING SAFER?
WHY DON'T YOU TRY RESEARCHING SOMETHING ELSE? SOMETHING THAT WON'T HAVE PEOPLE TRYING TO KILL YOU.
SOMEDAY...
...JUST LIKE THE PROFESSOR...
..:RUNE WIL:..
FIRIEL.
I HID THE EPHEMERIS IN YOUR MOTHER'S GRAVE.

...AT LEAST ONCE BEFORE I DIE.
LET'S GO BACK TO SERA FIELD SOMEDAY, FIRIEL. TO THE OBSERVATORY.
LET'S VISIT YOUR MOTHER'S GRAVE TOGETHER...
ONLY THE PROFESSOR AND I KNOW WHERE THAT IS.
THE WHOLE TIME THOSE PEOPLE HAD ME, I KEPT THINKING ONE THING...
...THAT IF I DIED, THEN NO ONE WOULD BE ABLE TO TELL YOU WHERE YOUR MOTHER'S BODY WAS LAIN TO REST.

THERE!
WHAT DOES HE MEAN BY THAT?
FIRIEL, DID YOU SEE IT?
RUNE.
RUNE ...
I LIKE YOU. A LOT.
IF RUNE ISN'T HAPPY, THEN THERE'S NO WAY I COULD BE HAPPY, EITHER.
I MEAN...

I HOPE HE CAN FEEL WHAT I'M FEELING NOW...
...YOU'RE MY ONE AND ONLY PRECIOUS FAMILY!
FIRIEL ...
HEY!!
...YOU REALLY ARE TOTALLY CLUELESS.
SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT HERE.
MAYBE THAT ONE DIDN'T MAKE RUNE HAPPY?
?
ARE YOU SAYING I DID SOMETHING WRONG?!
NEVER MIND. FORGET IT.
THIS WAY IS MORE LIKE YOU, ANYWAY.
OKAY. LET'S DO THAT ONE MORE TIME, THEN.

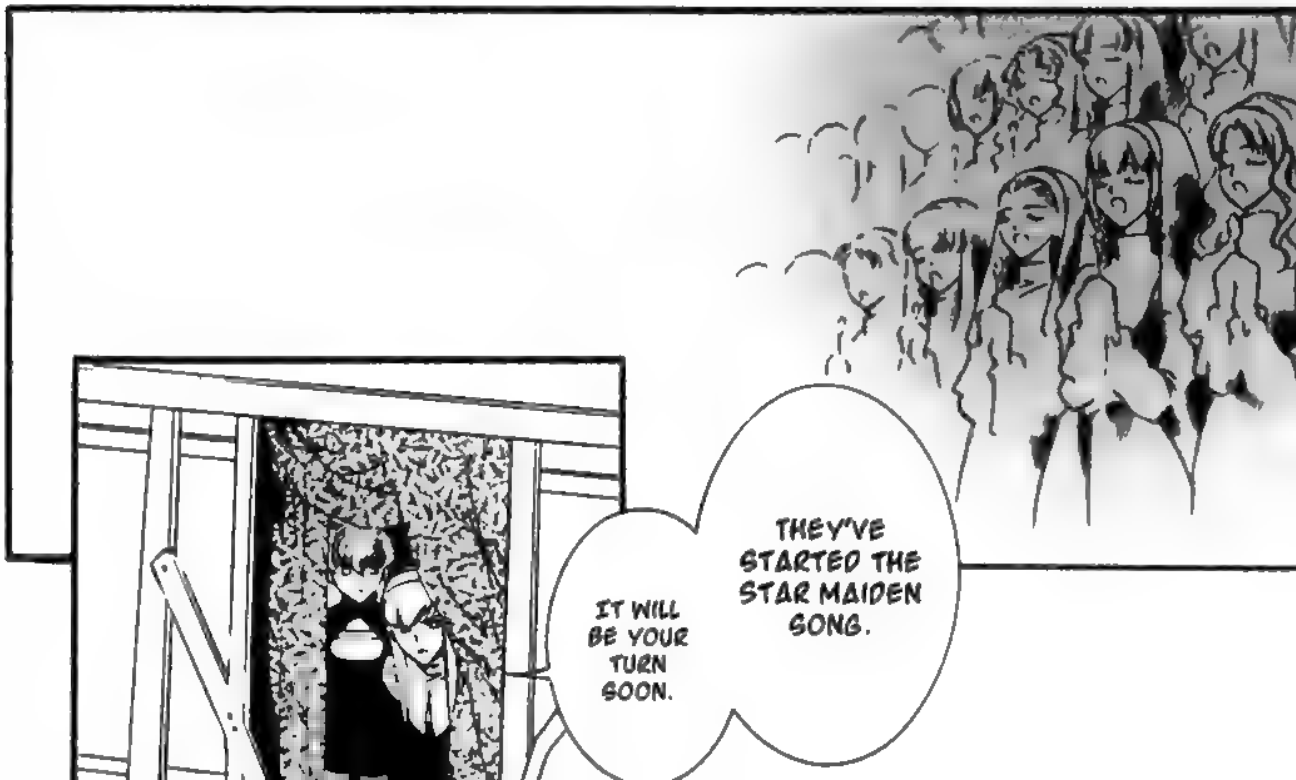
...OKAY.
THIS LETTER IS FOR YOU I FOUND IT ON THE FLOOR

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'D STOOP TO SOMETHING THIS UNDER-HANDED!
"THE HARVEST MAIDEN FESTIVAL WILL SEE ANOTHER SACRIFICE TAKE PLACE. THE PETALED STAGE WILL BECOME A FLOWER-BEDECKED COFFIN. IF YOU DO NOT CEASE YOUR CHALLENGE, THE BODY THOSE FLOWERS DECORATE WILL BE THAT OF YOUR MOST PRECIOUS LOVED ONE."
THIS WASN'T WRITTEN BY ANY OF US.
WHO ELSE IS THERE?!
LISTEN, LITTLE KITTEN.
YOU MAY HAVE DECIDED IN YOUR OWN LITTLE MIND THAT WE ARE BEHIND EVERYTHING...
...BUT BE IT BY SOMETHING LIKE ROSELITTE'S DEATH OR SOME OTHER ACCIDENT, THERE WAS NOTHING THE STUDENT COUNCIL COULD GAIN BY DISRUPTING OUR OWN PLAY.
HUH? BUT, THEN... WHO?
WHO KNOWS?
THE ONLY THING THAT'S CERTAIN IS THAT ROSELITTE WAS KILLED BY SOMEONE WHO IS AGAINST THE STUDENT COUNCIL.

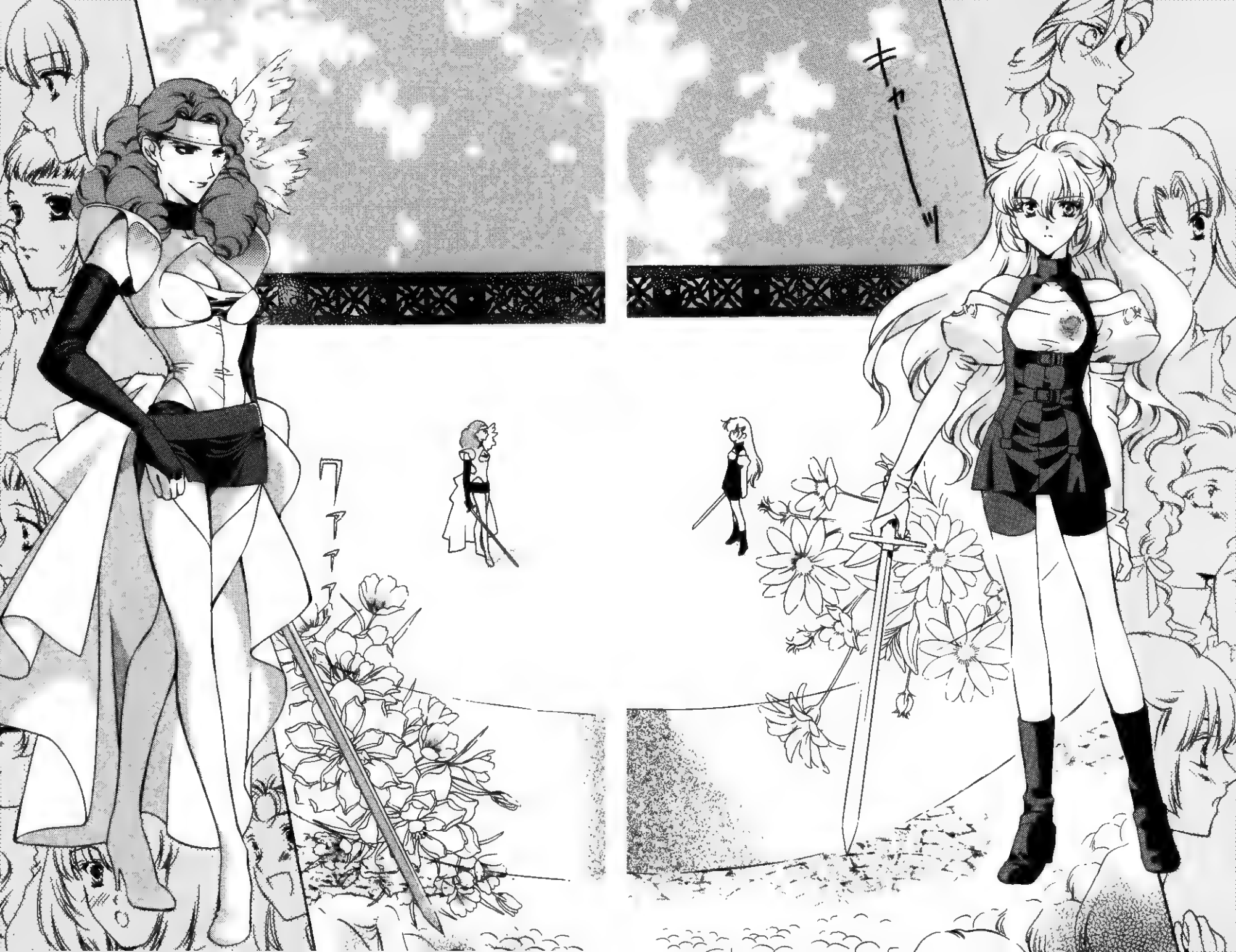
HELLO, FIRIEL.
IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO CHANGE INTO YOUR COSTUME.
VINCENT WOULDN'T...!
THE RULES STATE THE CHALLENGER MUST ALWAYS WEAR BLACK...
...BUT IN YOUR CASE IT MAKES YOU LOOK QUITE GALLANT.
NO WAY...!
BY SOMEONE AGAINST THE COUNCIL...
FIRIEL?
SISTER FIRIEL!!
Eep!
BUT, EVEN IF SHE DID...
...THERE'S TOO MUCH RIDING ON THIS FOR ME TO JUST GIVE UP!

Oh!
LADIES, PLEASE. IF FIRIEL WORE ALL THAT, SHE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO MOVE!
Vincent
WE MADE THESE FOR YOU!
WOULD YOU PLEASE WEAR THIS SASH?
I WOULD BE HONORED IF YOU WOULD WEAR THIS LACE ON YOUR COSTUME!
OH!
WHAT A LOVELY ROSE CORSAGE.
THE CRYSTAL DEWDROP REALLY SPARKLES.

I'LL THINK OF THIS FLOWER AS ALL YOUR GOOD WISHES FOR ME
SISTER FIRIEL...!
YOU'RE FABULOUS. /
THANK YOU, EVERYONE! I'LL DO MY BEST!!


THEY'VE STARTED THE STAR MAIDEN SONG.
IT WILL BE YOUR TURN SOON.

...NO...
ANGEL AND DEVIL.
ALL THE GIRLS AT THE TAURUS ACADEMY...
...ALL OF THE WOMEN OF GRAAL ARE BOTH OF THOSE THINGS AT THE SAME TIME.
GO!
YOUNG MAIDENS WHO LOOK COMPLETELY PURE IN BOTH BODY AND MIND.
BUT, UNDERNEATH THEIR PRISTINE EXTERIORS LIE SHARP, VICIOUS FANGS THEY ARE NOT AFRAID TO USE.
VOICES SO CLEAR THEY COULD FLOAT AWAY ON THE CLOUDS...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NO!
THE STUDENT COUNCIL GOT THE EXACT SAME LETTER AS YOU!
YOU SENT IT?!
SO. YOU CHOSE TO GO AHEAD WITH THE CHALLENGE AFTER ALL, I SEE.
EVEN THOUGH...
...YOU READ THAT LETTER.
THIS ONE, AND THE ONE WE RECEIVED RIGHT BEFORE THE SUMMER EQUINOX FESTIVAL, BOTH SAID SOMEONE WOULD DIE IF WE DIDN'T CANCEL THE FESTIVALS!
SO YOU'RE SAYING ROSELITTE WAS KILLED BECAUSE YOU IGNORED THE WARNING?!

I COULDN'T TURN BACK! NOT THEN, NOT NOW!
THE ONLY WAY FOR A COMMON-BORN GIRL LIKE ME TO SURVIVE IN THE ROYAL COURT IS TO KEEP WINNING!
IN LOOKS, IN ABILITIES...
I CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE EVEN ONCE!
ESPECIALLY TO A LITTLE NOBODY LIKE YOU!!

EEEK!
LOOK
OUT!

THIS IS NOT GOOD.
FIRIEL'S DISADVANTAGED BY BEING FACED TO THE SUN.
AND HER SKILLS ARE NOWHERE NEAR RAVENNA'S IN THE FIRST PLACE...
WHAT'S WRONG?
NOW HERE'S AN IDEA
WHY DON'T I SLICE YOUR CLOTHES OFF PIECE BY PIECE UNTIL YOU'RE COMPLETELY NAKED?
YOU'LL BE THE LAUGHINGSTOCK OF THE ENTIRE ACADEMY.

I'LL MAKE YOU REGRET...
...EVER HAVING DARED DEFY MY STUDENT COUNCIL!!

End of Book 3

• Hello everyone! Thank you so much for picking up The Good Witch of the West volume three! This volume is the "Academy Arc," roughly equivalent to volume two of the novels. Like I said in the last volume, I'm having a BLAST!!! YAY!! I feel so great I want to thank everyone! I wonder what on earth I did in my previous life to deserve so much awesomeness in this one. This has got to be one of the best three moments in my entire life! I mean, in this volume my favorite character, Leandra, is introduced! I wish she could keep trying to seduce Rune. (I absolutely ADORE that one scene in the third volume of the novel's side-stories!)

• I haven't drawn this manga alone, though. I've had tons of help. I've received piles of fan mail, a mountain of advice on fencing, help above and beyond the call of duty from my assistants, incredible support of my slow self from my supervisor, all my friends, and of course the wonderful Ogiwara-sensei. THANK YOU SO MUCH, ALL OF YOU!!!

Volume three was a veritable storm of dresses. Everybody was wearing them. I've done a lot of practice drawing corsets and all sorts of dresses (it's hard!), but no matter how hard I try, I just can't seem to come up with enough designs. I've gotten a lot of different books on dresses, but it's not enough.

Attention!

Send Mamokawa your dress designs! There's a really high chance they'll be used in future volumes of Good Witch! In other words, help me!

I'll be sure to send you a thank you note in return!

-Send designs c/o:
TOKYOPOP
Attn: Hope Donovan
5900 Wilshire Blvd,
Suite 2000
Los Angeles,
CA 90036

2005. 2. 18
Haruhiko Mamokawa

What do you want?!
What are you hoping to accomplish here at the Academy?!
Do you really want to know?
The answer is on the next page. →
Heh heh heh...

This isn't real!
The one place no one may ever enter: The forbidden forest of Kittens!
.....
WOW

Dear Mother,

My duel with Ravenna ended with a most frightful conclusion. Though, once again it is thanks to Adale that no serious harm was done. Now that I am back with her and Eusis, I wonder if I ever shall be free of the Roland family, or if Adale will press me further on this idea of marriage to Eusis...

Firiel Dee

In the Next

THE GOOD WITCH OF THE WEST™